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[PRICE ONE PENNY.]



"MAURICE! MAURICE!" SHE WHISPERED, TENDERLY. "OH, MY DEAR, I LOVE YOU!"

## A DAUGHTER OF THE PEOPLE.

### [A NOVELETTE.]

(Concluded.)

#### CHAPTER IV.

"I WONDER what she is doing!" the lad said, as they walked along. He saw that his companion's face was ghastly, his lips twitching violently. "Oh! Ormsby! Can I do anything for you?"

"Thanks, no. I am not in the least ill. But the excitement has 'taken it out of me,' as we used to say at Eton. I feel used up!" He laughed as he spoke, but his laugh was not pleasant to hear.

Oliver looked curiously at him.

"Don't you wish the law allowed duelling?"

"I do, heartily. But there are insults that

can only be wiped out in that way," then he fell again into silence, because his heart was very sore for Jean; but Oliver could not refrain from speech.

"I wonder if he will ask for an apology!" "Or summon me for assault," the other said, scornfully. "To-morrow will prove—and the future will probably enlighten us very much on certain dark subjects. Well, Oliver, we part here. No, thanks, I won't go home with you. To-night I am fit only for my own company."

Alone he went to his chambers. He knew now it was war to the knife between himself and Grastorex. Yes, and between himself and society.

On his table lay a small pile of invitations—very small compared with the usual heap.

"Do they mean putting me outside the pale?" he questioned, fiercely. "Very well. It is their day now—mine and here to come." He set his teeth, and resolved to make some one suffer for the work of the last forty-eight hours. He was not a meek or a patient man, but he could have

borne much more had he only been concerned; but her name and her future were concerned, and the misery she had been made to suffer raised a very demon of wrath in him.

He wondered what would be "my lord's" next step, and determined to keep a strict watch upon Valentine Munro. He had a perfect conviction that she had been instrumental in bringing about the present state of affairs, only he was at a loss to discover her motive.

It was a terrible night to him, and he longed for the day. At last it came, with rosy streaks of light across the grey and green sky; the birds began to twitter, and then the sun sprang up in all his splendour. Maurice sighed.

"Another day's agony for her!" and could almost wish her dead, that so she might escape from the burden of her life.

His love was working a very cruel change in him; he looked years older than at the commencement of the season, and his eyes were sunken. It seemed to him a terrible and shameful thing that he should love his friend's wife,

and he would have died rather than let "my lady" read his secret.

In the long watches of the night he resolved to postpone his departure; he would not seem to run away from the storm; and, being near, he might indirectly help her.

He rode in the Row that morning, and met "my Lady Jean" driving with the Duchess. All eyes were upon them, so he reined in his horse by the side of the carriage, and paused a moment to exchange greetings.

"My lady" was equal to the occasion, and spoke and looked with her customary gentle friendliness.

Valentine Munro bit her lip when she heard both men and women say there could not be "much harm in Lady Greatorox, or her Grace would not continue upon terms of friendship with her;" and some added that "one might judge, from Ormsby's known character, and her ladyship's, that they could not so far transgress all social law." At parting the elder lady remarked very audibly that her friend would dine with her, and stay with her a few days, if she could so far prevail upon her.

Then the carriage moved on. And when Valentine bowed to the Duchess she was not a little enraged to be treated to the same indignity that she had thrust upon "my lady" the day of the Horticultural Fête.

The slow days crept by, and Jean waited in silent anguish and suspense for tidings from her husband. She knew she must expect no pity, no consideration; and but for the Duchess would have gone away and hidden herself from him, but her Grace said, "You owe it to yourself and to him to vindicate yourself. Leave your house and come to me!"

But my lady answered "No! If he returned and found me gone it would only add to his bitterness. I shall let all things remain as they were. But, oh! I wish I felt justified in discharging Jenny!"

"You have always distrusted her, and I rely upon your instinct. Send her away!"

"No, I shall not do that; I might do the girl an injury. Perhaps I shall not long be able to retain her. I believe Lord Greatorox intends offering me an allowance on condition that I leave him. If so, I should not keep a maid!"

"Do you mean you would agree to anything so detrimental to yourself?" surprisedly.

"Why not?" wearily. "It would be better perhaps for both." And in her heart she thought, "there is no man so cruel as the fickle lover." But no one heard her speak in condemnation of Greatorox, and the Duchess said she was a saint. She had grown the very shadow of herself; her manner was listless, her voice languid, and in the beautiful eyes the shadows lay so deep that it seemed no gleam of joy could for a moment lift or disperse them. The sweet, proud face had lost its rounded contour, the features looked pinched a little, and the tender mouth had a downward, sorrowful curve.

In silence she was waiting for the end, the final blow. She thought she had prepared herself for any cruelty, and that come what would she should make no outcry, no protest. But she did not; she could not guess the extent of her calamity, or the depth of wickedness to which her husband would descend.

On a sunny day at the close of May she sat in a pleasant room talking with the Duchess, when a letter was brought to her. With a little apology she broke the seal and read the lines written in a strange hand. Then the paper fell from her nerveless fingers, and with a cry the Duchess never forgot, she fell face downwards upon the floor. Her Grace clashed the bell, and Jenny answered the summons.

"Not you!" the lady said, stopping her voluble exclamations by a gesture. "Send some other."

They lifted my lady and laid her upon a couch, and the Duchess secured the letter so that it might not fall into a servant's hand.

They applied restoratives, and vainly, for a long time; but at length the heavy white lids uplifted, and the dark eyes looked round with such an expression of anguish that the parlour-maid, a tender-hearted girl, began to cry.

"Send them all away!" my lady said, in a dull, low voice; and one by one they went. Then she said to her friend, "The letter! where is it! Oh, Heaven! how can I bear this and live! Read for yourself—read! I cannot tell you what is written."

It was from a solicitor, informing Jean her husband was about to petition for a divorce on the ground of her intimacy with Maurice Ormsby. And when the lady read that she tore the letter into a hundred pieces, and said, in a blast of passion,—

"The devil!" then fell on her knees beside the unhappy wife, drew the beautiful head upon her bosom, sobbing,—

"Oh, my child! my child!" But my lady did not cry. She had no tears with which to ease her heart, that seemed bursting with its agony.

"Surely," she said, in a strangely apathetic voice, "it would be no sin to end it all by death! Why should I hesitate to take the life he so wickedly ended?"

"What! And leave your name blackened by his foul lies! Leave him free to marry Valentine Munro, as he would as soon as decency would permit. Rescue yourself, Jean! This is no time to fold your hands and be resigned. This is no time to hold silence about your wrongs. Up, up, child! and show the whole world what manner of man he is you call husband."

At last Jean's eyes flashed responsive fire, and a keen note of outraged honour ran through her voice.

"You are right. I have borne his cruelty and injustice until I can no longer bear it. I have kept my wrongs hidden out of sight, and tried in my own heart not to blame him too bitterly. That is over. I have no love, no pardon left for him. I will fight it out! But oh, my friend, when the fight is over, the consequent excitement gone—and I sit down to think—shall I not go mad with remembrance of it all!"

And she covered her eyes with her hands.

"Oh!" she said, again, "how can I live through days when all the papers shall be full of my name!—when people will hurry to buy them that they may read 'The Great Divorce Case!' Oh! the shame of it all will kill me," rocking to and fro in an abandonment of woe.

"If you would only cry, my dear, it would ease your heart."

"I cannot; I am past that. Oh! if I cannot prove my innocence!"

"Love, it shall be proved!" and hastily she added, "I shall stay with you now until all is ended. Now, with an air of authority, "let me take you to your room. You must try to rest; you will want your strength."

Hour after hour she sat by "my lady," and when at last, worn by grief and a long succession of wakeful nights, she slept, the Duchess stole quietly downstairs.

At one landing she came upon Jenny and Greaves in earnest conversation, and these words in Jenny's voice reached her,—

"If she can prove her innocence let her; she will find it difficult!"

Then as they caught sight of the lady, they hurried in different directions, and she deliberated in her mind whether or no she should demitise them on her own authority.

Fortunately, she decided to say nothing of the words she had overheard to Jean.

Perhaps it would be well to retain their services: through them a clue might be gained to this diabolical plot against Lady Greatorox.

As subsequent events proved, she acted with the wisdom and foresight of a lawyer.

She summoned the butler, a man to be trusted, and questioned him as to his opinion of Jenny and Greaves. It was not a favourable one, and he confessed he heartily disliked both maid and man.

Then her Grace begged him to keep a strict watch on their movements, telling him if by his efforts he discovered anything to throw a light upon the case, she would not fail to reward him.

He answered steadily he wanted no reward; "my lady" had always been good to him, and was deservedly popular with the servants, and begged her to accept of their great sympathy

with her; for Miss Jenny had taken care to tell the news, and when questioned as to the way in which she learned it, tossed her head defiantly, and said they would soon know now, and openly triumphed in the misery of her generous mistress.

The Duchess did one thing more—she engaged a detective, and introduced him in her own livery into the house.

He ate with the servants and conducted himself as one of them, and none, but honest Tibbs the butler, knew who and what he was.

And society waited impatiently for the coming on of the case, and regarded Maurice Ormsby with intense curiosity; but "my lady" never left her house.

## CHAPTER V.

SLOWLY the weeks and months wore by, still Frederick Greatorox absented himself from his home, and still the Duchess stayed on with the unhappy wife.

She it was who made choice of Jean's counsel, and advised Maurice as to his course of conduct. He never presented himself at "my lady's," her Grace would not allow that; but he and his godmother met daily at her own residence, and many long and serious conversations ensued.

None of them left town, although the season had long since ended, and it was then November.

Jean was so listless—so apathetic—that those who saw her said she was surely dying. Her face was pale almost to ghastliness, her eyes weary, and the dark circles about them told of terrible days and sleepless nights, of undying agony and fear.

The facts of Lord Greatorox's case seemed too clear to refuse. Everything looked very black against his hapless wife, who could make no defence that would hold good in Court; could only protest her innocence, but bring forward no proofs of it.

Even the eminent barrister she had engaged began to despair of saving her good name, and winning her cause.

He was greatly interested in his client, and believed in her purity implicitly; but then of what use was his belief if he could not impress it upon others?

So the dreary time wore on, and then one day her Grace found a letter directed to Jenny, lying in the alcove the maid had so often found a safe refuge or listening place.

The writing was in a fashionable hand, and evidently that of a lady. It seemed to her Grace she had seen it before, and hating the part she played she yet justified herself in reading the enclosure, for "my lady's" sake. Thus it ran:—

"November 7th, 1895.

"You must not fall us now or grow faint-hearted. Remember the reward Lord Greatorox has promised you and Greaves if you play your parts well. You are foolish to believe that detection can ensue. You are perfectly safe, and have only to adhere to the story we concocted, and all will be well. Let me hear no more nonsense about perjury, etcetera; if punishment falls upon any it would be upon myself and Lord Greatorox—you are merely a tool. I should like to see you to-morrow at seven thirty, outside the Prince's Gate; do not fail me, as I am in town but for one night, and have got away with the greatest difficulty. When I am Lady Greatorox you shall have your reward."

"VALENTINE MUNRO."

"So, so!" said her Grace, with a flash in her eyes. "That is the game, is it!" She slipped the letter into her pocket. "I think this will incriminate you, my dear Miss Valentine. You were terribly imprudent to mention names," and she went upstairs to Jean.

"My dear," she said gently, "there is no need for despair. I have that in my possession which will establish your innocence, and convict your enemies."

She placed the letter in Jean's hands. My lady read it through quietly, and for a long time neither spoke nor looked up; but suddenly the





heavy white lids lifted, and her Grace saw, with a throb of triumph, that there was a still and deep resentment in the wonderful eyes. When she spoke her voice was scarcely above a whisper, but clear and distinct.

"This decides me," she said. "As they have shown me no mercy, so I will show them none; we must meet them on their own ground. You will kindly communicate the fact to Mr. Ormsby."

"Certainly. But first we must consult Taylor the detective; we should not move without him. Then I will drive round to Mr. Ballaford's (Jean's counsel). This is a most important item in your case."

She rang the bell, and Taylor appeared.

"We have something of importance to acquaint you with," said the Duchess, "but we wish Jenny and Greaves to be safely out of hearing. Our doubts of their honesty have been fully verified!"

Taylor bowed gravely, and suggested that the worthy pair should be despatched on some pretence to distant parts of the town, and this having been done, he returned to the ladies.

"You have a most important weapon in your hand, my lady," he said, giving the choice epistle back to Jean; "I should advise you to forward it at once to Mr. Ballaford, and to maintain strict silence until you hear from him!"

"I will go to him at once, Taylor," said the Duchess; "and you will be doubly watchful!"

"Yes, your Grace. Having discovered so much we must be on the alert to discover more. Greaves has always opened the letter-bag since his entrance to this house. Will you not give me the task in future?—or, better still, allow me to call at the office for any letters there may be; and I consider I should be justified in reading Miss Jenny's before they reach her. It will be easily managed, and my lady owes it to herself to acquaint herself with the enemy's movements!"

"It seems dishonourable," began Jean, but her friend interrupted.

"Nonsense, Jean; you must lay aside your scruples in such a case as this. Taylor, we will leave it all to you; but may I suggest that it would be as well if there were witnesses to the meeting arranged for to-night?"

"I had not forgotten that, your Grace. I should be glad to have a colleague, and for that purpose will go at once (with your permission) to Scotland Yard!"

"Sparely," Jean said, tremulously, "if Lord Greatorix and Miss Munro know their plot is discovered, the former will withdraw his petition, and the latter gladly make me an ample apology. In such a case I would not press the matter farther!"

"Pardon, my lady," Taylor remarked, quietly, "such a course would do you no good. They would contrive it in such a way that you would appear guilty, and my lord a long-suffering, much-forgiving husband!"

"Let it be as you will; but I wish it were all over," said my lady, wearily.

Taylor preceded her Grace to Mr. Ballaford's, and on her arrival she found him in the great man's chamber. There was present, too, another detective, a short wiry man with grizzled hair, and, after awhile, Maurice Ormsby also made his appearance.

The upshot of the interview was that the two detectives, Taylor and Kirbyshire, should adjourn to Prince's Gate that night, and gather as much as was possible from the meeting between Jenny Baldwin and Valentine; that "my lady" should retain the services of the former and appear unsuspecting; that all should maintain strict silence as to any knowledge of the conspiracy until the trial came on.

With this understanding they parted, and her Grace returned to my lady, Taylor to the servants' hall. He met Jenny Baldwin at the entrance, looking very much distracted, and, as he always professed a great partiality for that young lady, he gallantly saluted her upon the lips.

Jenny was too harassed to receive his advances in her usual coquettish spirit; and Taylor asked in a tender tone what ailed her, alleging that she

looked pale and ill, and declaring himself to be devoured with anxiety concerning her. She fell into his trap, for she was as vain as the proverbial peacock, and had no doubt that her charms had devastated his heart.

"Oh, Mr. Taylor!" she said, an affection of coyness breaking through her very evident trouble; "you are so very flattering. I'm afraid you don't mean half what you say; but if indeed you do, you will help me to find a letter I have lost. I would not have any of the servants come across it for worlds—nor—yet Greaves."

"And what has Greaves to do with it, my pretty Jane?" questioned Taylor.

Jenny dropped her eyes, and put her apron to her face, to hide a blush not there.

"You see, Mr. Taylor, he and I have been engaged some time. Well, to-day, I had a letter from mother, telling me such things about him as would prevent me marrying him—even if I cared for him, as I thought I did."

"I will help you with the greatest pleasure, my dear; but, Miss Jenny, who has made you care less for poor Greaves?"

"Oh, how could you think I care for anybody else, and even if I did, I should tell you last of all."

And here she made a feint of going, but Taylor caught her by the waist, and, kissing her again, asked—

"Am I the happy man?"

"Now, do go away!" ejaculated Miss Jenny; "you naughty, naughty man; oh! if Greaves saw us he would be so jealous. No, I won't kiss you—well, then, only once. Now go away and try to find that letter, and mind you bring it to me directly you have it."

He answered that his joy was to obey her, and moved away, and when he had gone a little distance Miss Jenny sat down upon the stairs and thrust her apron into her mouth to stifle her laughter. When she had a little recovered her composure, she dried her eyes and said,—

"What a fool he is! but he amuses me. As if I should marry a footman! No, thank you, Mr. Taylor; with my advantages I may do far better."

The day passed on, and as she heard nothing of the letter and saw no change in "my lady's" manner towards her, her courage rose, and her anxiety grew less.

Towards the evening she requested permission to visit her friends the following night, and smiled maliciously to herself when it was granted without demur. She informed her fellow-servants that she was to have an outing, adding, with downcast eyes, and sorrowful voice, that she was about to visit her poor, dear mother, who was very ill,—

"Nothing infectious you know, but still enough to make me anxious."

Taylor loudly exclaimed that she had inflicted a cruel disappointment upon him, as he had received permission to attend a theatre that evening, and had hoped she would be his companion.

Shortly after dusk she stole out, quite unaware she was followed by Taylor, carefully disguised, and his colleague Kirbyshire. She went swiftly towards Prince's Gate, and began to walk to and fro, muttering to herself that "she was always late," and quite unaware that the two men hovered near in the deepest shadows.

Presently a slim figure habited in black stole across the road and joined her; the two men drew nearer.

"You are late again, miss," said Jenny, in a tone of half-veiled insolence, which Valentine secretly resented: "I'm nearly frozen, waiting for you."

"I could not come before," apologetically. "As it is, I am in danger of being detected. My absence from home is sure to be noticed. I am staying with a prim, old maiden aunt, who does not countenance night roamings."

"Perhaps you'll tell me, miss, why you particularly wished to see me, and give me my instructions as soon as possible! Remember I've my good name to consider as well as yourself."

But for the darkness Jenny must have seen Miss Munro's disdainful *mien*; but Valentine

permitted none of her scorn to be palpable in her voice. It would not do to offend her accomplice.

The two women walked up and down, the men keeping as close as they could with safety. But they could hear nothing, as Valentine spoke scarcely above a whisper. But when she was parting with Jenny, she took off one of her gloves, and drawing off a valuable ring, pressed it into the girl's willing hand, saying, audibly,—

"That is an earnest of the reward you will receive when you have helped to drag down that woman, and I am Lady Greatorix!"

"Hush!" Jenny said, cautiously. "Don't speak so loudly. Who are those two men?"

"Oh!" Valentine answered, easily; "they heard nothing; and from his dress I should say one is a foreigner."

"Still one can't be too careful; and the punishment for perjury isn't a light one, you know, miss," retorted the maid.

"I wish you would not call things by such ugly names," Valentine said, with a shiver. "It's a nasty habit you have recently contracted."

"Oh, I'm not afraid to call a 'spade a spade!' contemptuously; and there's no sin in perjury—unless it's discovered. I hope, miss, you're careful not to be seen with my lord!"

"Of course I am. He is in Scotland; and tomorrow I leave for Dawlish. We shall be far enough apart to satisfy the most carping critics of our conduct. Oh!" with a laugh, "he and I are merely acquaintances. Now, Jenny, half a cab for me. I can't walk back alone through these dreadful streets at this hour!"

Jenny Baldwin did as she was bidden; and, having seen Miss Munro drive off, turned her face towards home.

"So you cannot walk through these dreadful streets, but I can," she muttered, viciously. "Ah, well, madam! these laugh best who laugh last." And when you are "my lady," you won't find me so easy to shake off as you seem to imagine.

She smiled maliciously, and tripped on her way with a comparatively light heart. When she reached home, she found Taylor sitting before the fire in the servants' hall.

"Why!" she said, surprisedly, "I thought you had gone to the play!"

"I started off with that intention; but as you were not my companion, I determined to put it off until you are able to go."

"Very kind of you, I'm sure," with a coquettish toss of her head. And she sat down at a short distance from him. He leaned towards her.

"My dear Miss Jenny, you are lovelier than my lady!" he said, tenderly.

"That is a poor compliment," she answered.

"My lady" looks like a ghost, and is as thin as a lamp-post; and well she may be considering what she has upon her conscience. Poor Lord Greatorix!"

"You think 'my lady' guilty then?"

"Think! Feeling is believing. Ah! she will soon be shorn of her plumes; and I for one shan't be sorry. Like all people who have risen she is so arrogant there is no bearing with her. You see, Mr. Taylor, she was only a work-girl, or something of that sort, in the City, I believe."

"Oh! I wasn't aware of that," Taylor said, with great apparent interest.

"Weren't you? Oh! I could tell you things of her; but then I'm not a gossip. Only sometimes I can't help being angry, because you see she isn't a lady. She has prospered, whilst my family has gone down. My father was a clergyman, and I feel our reverses terribly."

"Naturally," assented Taylor, sympathetically, although he knew Jenny's male parent had been a coal-heaver, and had varied the monotony of his daily labour by "holding forth" at a ranter's chapel.

She had been a clever child, and had made the most of what teaching she could get, and at the age of twelve had been taken away from her squalid surroundings by a charitable lady, who educated her with the view to making a companion of her.

The soft, meek air of the child deceived her

patroness, and she believed Jenny Baldwin to be a walking epitome of all the virtues. But a day came when she learned her favourite was cunning, avaricious, ungrateful; and the good lady's heart ached sorely over this discovery.

She sent Jenny back to her friends. The girl was then sixteen, and she knew very well she must seek employment, as her parents were too poor to support her in idleness. She went at once to an advertising office, and there fell in with Valentine Munro, who engaged her as her maid, at extremely small wages.

Now, after three years' servitude Miss Jenny thought she saw a way to wealth, or comparative wealth, and she seized it greedily.

She had no ruth upon any creature who stood in her way. She was one of those cold, bloodless women who are so "bold to sin," but too "weak to die."

Love was a passion she could never feel, unless, indeed, it were love of money and of power. She was pretty, too, in a cold, hard way, and her bright hair was brushed away from a small, round forehead, of a type usual in portraits of murderers.

Now, as she leaned towards Taylor, for a moment, passion deepened and darkened her pale eyes.

"I would give something," she said, viciously, "to drag 'my lady' down. She has often insulted me; and it would be the gladdest day of my life to see her down in the dust!"

She flashed a glance at the imperturbable Taylor, who answered Miss Jenny quickly.

"I can readily understand your feeling. It is terrible to be treated disdainfully by one's superiors. I have suffered in the same way myself, and so can sympathise with you."

Miss Jenny beamed upon him; for, despite all her cunning, she had more than an ordinary share of vanity; and Taylor had speedily discovered this was her only weak point, and attacked it with no mean success.

He imparted the little he had learned that night to Jean and the Duchess, and advised a strict watch should be kept upon Miss Jenny. He fetched the letters from the post-office, and contrived to open the lady's maid's and redress them without exciting her suspicions, so that he was thoroughly acquainted with all her movements and those of her employers. He carried messages to Maurice from the Duchess, and proved himself invaluable.

Maurice himself remained quietly in his chambers waiting the coming trial. His loneliness oppressed him like a nightmare; and the thought of Jean's woe, her grievous calamity weighed upon his soul night and day. If only he could have foreseen his one-time friend's purpose in throwing him so much into his wife's society! If only he could have read between the lines, and so have saved Jean all this misery! "But then," he reflected, "some other man, less scrupulous than I, might have been chosen as the scapegoat, and she have suffered more indignity than is put upon her now."

The suspense was horrible to him. He wished the trial was ended, and the worst known; anything would be better than this wearing anxiety, anything acceptable save the fact that he was so near to her and yet so far.

He dared not think of what might come to pass if the case went against her. And when he heard Taylor's welcome news concerning the detection of a conspiracy he trembled like a weak woman, and in the excess of his joy could find no word to say.

The season began once more, and all the fashionable world was on the qui vive to hear the "Grestorex Divorce Case." Women who lived only for, and by, excitement, blasé men, mild amongst themselves it would be "the thing" of the season, and speculated upon the issue of it.

Maurice Ormsby was a man who had won the respect of all, and "my lady's" grace and beauty had made a great impression upon the idle men about town. Grestorex was not a general favourite, and so not a few hinted that he had grown tired of his lovely but low-born wife, and wished to fob her upon Ormsby.

## CHAPTER VI.

It was the day of the trial—a sunny April day—and in the streets the flower-girls were exhibiting primroses, violets, and blue-bells for sale; the Row was unusually deserted, for all the great world had flocked together to hear the "Grestorex Divorce Case."

The Court was crowded and very hot; girls and matrons used their fans energetically, whilst the men wiped their brows and declared they were "melting."

Mrs. Minnerton, bosom friend of her Grace the Duchess of Etherington, sat in a very prominent position in the gallery. She was fully convinced of Jean's innocence, and had taken her under her care, for she had refused to absent herself from the Court.

She sat silent, with heart that throbbed and ached, and head so heavy she scarce could raise it. All eyes turned upon her, but she sat as though unconscious that she was "the observed of all observers." White and still, with the weight of her cruel woe darkening the depths of her wonderful eyes.

The first witness called was Valentine Munro, and as her name sounded through the Court, girls and men whispered together, and glanced curiously towards the witness-box.

Another moment, and Valentine took up her position there—calm, pretty, with a most innocent expression on her fair face, and in her forget-me-not eyes.

She kissed the Book, and took the oath, then faced the counsel for the prosecution. She stated clearly and concisely that she had once been the most intimate friend of Lady Grestorex, but that having seen much in her conduct towards Mr. Ormsby that displeased her, she had thought it wisest to end the intimacy.

Then she lifted her eyes, and for a moment met the calm contempt in Jean's, and trembled, yet contrived to acquit herself perfectly.

She was followed by other witnesses, the most important being Jenny Baldwin, whose ready brain invented many lies to "my lady's" detriment.

Things began to look very black against Jean, and some of Mrs. Minnerton's friends glanced curiously towards her, and were surprised to find her quite undisturbed.

At last the counsel for the prosecution ended, and that for the defence began.

Jean leaned forward and prepared to listen with bated breath.

There was a sad and quiet dignity in her demeanour, and the cruel ravages grief had wrought on her wondrous beauty made a profound impression upon those assembled.

Those who saw her for the first time in many months were grieved at the awful misery in her lovely eyes, and said among themselves, "Surely she cannot be guilty; she looks like a saint!"

Valentine Munro was again called, and as she entered, Maurice, who conducted his own case, looked into her eyes, and through all the anguish and shame in his, she read a certain triumph she was slow to understand.

The counsel for the defence then rose, and, addressing her, said,—

"I believe you were a great friend of Lady Grestorex!"

"That is true; but our friendship ended before the close of last summer."

"What caused the rupture between you?"

"I did not like the manner in which Lady Grestorex bore herself towards the gentlemen who visited her house; and I would not countenance—by my presence—the intimacy existing between Mr. Ormsby and her."

"Did you ever mention this to any acquaintance?"

"I do not know; I cannot remember, but I believe not."

"Not to Lady Threlley?"

"I may have done; I cannot say."

"Do you know Jenny Baldwin?"

"Yes, she is maid to Lady Grestorex. I recommended her to the place."

"That was in early stage of your friendship?"

"Yes, or I should not have advised her to accept the situation."

"Was she ever in your service?"

"For a short time; but I do not see how this bears on the case."

The barrister smiled in a reassuring way, then went on,—

"Did you hold any communication with Jenny Baldwin at any time during her residence with Lady Grestorex?"

"No!"

But the stifled colour leapt into her cheeks, then died out suddenly.

"Will you swear that you never appointed a meeting with her?"

"I will swear."

"And that you did not write her on November the seventh?"

Valentine grew ghastly white; but she said firmly,—

"I had no reason to correspond with her!"

"Were there not some tender passages between yourself and Lord Grestorex before his marriage?"

The opposing counsel rose:

"I object to that question, my lord!"

His lordship over-ruled it, Jean's counsel bowed to his decision, and continued his questions.

"Did you not at different times correspond with Lord Grestorex, and even meet him at various places clandestinely?"

"Sir!" with affected indignation, although her heart throbbed so madly that she could scarcely articulate her words, and her lips were white and dry.

"Answer me, if you please," he said, ruthlessly.

"I have neither corresponded nor met Lord Grestorex at any time. We were but casual acquaintances."

"And you will swear that you did not seek to prejudice him in any way against his wife, or to mislead his thoughts regarding her?"

"I will swear that, emphatically," and then glancing up she met Jean's eyes full of loathing and astonishment, and wavered and faltered in her evidence.

"You never met Jenny Baldwin at Prince's Gate, alone and disguised?"

"Never."

"Think again. Did you not meet her there on the eighth of November last, and at parting did you not give her a ring, and say, 'That is an earnest of the reward you will receive when you have helped to drag down that woman, and I am Lady Grestorex!'"

The witness essayed vainly to speak. She moistened her white lips, and gasped for breath, then at last contrived to articulate,—

"I am insulted by such suspicions. I have never exchanged a word with Jenny Baldwin since she left my employ!"

"You can go down," and as she went a low murmur ran through the Court, and the tide of public favour began to drift towards the white-faced woman who sat by so silently, a very presentment of woe.

Then came Oliver Grestorex, who gave his evidence in a straightforward, boyish way. His handsome young face, and clear eyes, his pleasant voice, attracted much attention.

He stated that Lord Grestorex had no cause of complaint against his wife; that he had forced her to accept the escort and companionship of Maurice Ormsby, he now believed, to effect his own purposes. That ever since his return to England he had lamented his marriage and wished it annulled, not because of any failing on "my lady's" part, but because he had wearied of her, and thought her humble birth a disgrace to his name. That he had persistently neglected and ill-treated her; that once or twice he had attempted to strike her in his (Oliver's) presence, and that she had borne all his ill-usage with the patience of an angel. He knew, too, that owing to her husband's jealousy she had asked Mr. Ormsby to discontinue his visits. He had done so, and they met by mere accident at the Horticultural Fête, where it was evident there was a conspiracy against "my lady." That on the same night Lord Grestorex had publicly insulted Ormsby, and been as publicly punished.

This formed the principal part of his evidence



and when he had ended Jenny Baldwin was recalled.

She reappeared with a half-smile upon her face, and in blissful ignorance of what awaited her. She settled her hat with a jaunty air, and glanced round upon the assembled people with ill-concealed triumph.

The counsel pounced upon her at once.

"When you have arranged your dress to your satisfaction, attend to me, please!"

A low titter at this sally ran through the Court. Jenny threw her head high.

"How long have you been in your present situation?"

"A year."

"And in all that time you have given satisfaction? Lady Greatorex has had no cause to complain of your conduct?"

"No; although she often made cause," Jenny said, half-defiantly.

"She never accused you of spying upon her actions?"

"Certainly not; I should have had nothing to gain by doing so!"

"Are you sure of that? Did not Miss Munro promise you a substantial reward if you could incriminate Lady Greatorex?"

"No; I know nothing of Miss Munro's affairs, and have not seen her since I left her employ, unless it was when she visited 'my lady.'"

"Then you and Graves were not in league with Miss Munro?"

"Certainly not!"

"Will you tell us what Miss Munro gave you that night at Prince's Gate for your services?"

The question was so sudden, so unexpected, that Jenny leaned back with frightened eyes, and stammered,—

"I don't understand you."

"Oh, yes, you do," in a coaxing tone, "and you are going to tell us what those services were."

"You are mistaken," the girl retorted, unflinchingly. "I was never at Prince's Gate with Miss Munro in my life. On the night in question—"

"What night?" as she hesitated, and felt with sudden dread she had made a sort of admission which might be detrimental to her.

"I—I—you have confused me. I cannot remember what I was about to say."

"Let me assist your memory; it was the eighth night of November last."

"I was staying then with some friends."

"Your mother and a crippled sister, I believe! Where do they reside?"

"At Holloway," looking round distressedly.

"Are they prepared to swear that you spent the evening with them?"

"They may not remember the exact date," she answered, wondering desperately if she would be required to produce those imaginary friends of hers.

"Your memory is more retentive, I see. But on the seventh of the month did you not receive a communication from Miss Munro?"

Again she hesitated, then said, sharply,—

"I did not."

"Allow me to refresh your mind," and producing the lost letter, he read it out amidst the groans and hisses of the Court.

Jenny was now ghastly white, and clung to the rail before her for support. In one moment she saw that discovery was inevitable; indeed, had taken place, and the best thing for her to do was to make a clean breast of it. It would simplify matters, and, perhaps, save her from just punishment.

Hurriedly she told her tale, now and again pausing until quiet had been obtained in the Court, and at last she went down amidst the execrations of three who, a short while since, believed "my lady" guilty.

The Duchess of Etherington supplied the place she had left vacant. As her clear, refined voice broke on the air, a sudden silence fell upon the assembled multitude.

She said she was Maurice Ormsby's godmother, and through him had become greatly interested in Lady Greatorex, whom she discovered to be an ill-used, neglected wife.

Maurice had been her husband's friend, and he

had continually thrown him into "my lady's" society, but that his frequent absences from home aroused her godson's suspicions, and he had consulted her as to the wisest course of conduct.

He agreed that, owing to "my lord's" unfounded jealousy, it would be better to see less of "my lady," but in that plan he was thwarted by Greatorex himself, who, meeting him, insisted that he should return home with him.

The friendly relations between them were resumed for a time, but at last Lord Greatorex treated his wife with such brutality, because of her friendship with Maurice, that in self-defence she had begged the latter to cease visiting the house.

"Since," added the Duchess, "since her husband's desertion, I have resided with Lady Greatorex, and can solemnly swear she has not seen or exchanged any words with my godson. It was by my advice that a detective entered the house, ostensibly as my servant. I have no more to say."

Her evidence was followed by that of Taylor and Kirbyshire, and the Court was in a state of violent excitement.

Jean still leaned forward with white, intent face, and burning eyes; her lips were set in a straight, firm line, and her hands were tightly clenched.

At last came the verdict, and it was received with ringing cheers. "My lady" and Maurice Ormsby would leave the Court without a shadow of suspicion on their names. "My lord," Valentine Munro and Jenny Baldwin stood convicted of one of the vilest conspiracies ever conceived.

"My lady" sank back, faint and exhausted; from under the heavy, white lids the slow tears oozed, and deep sobs stirred her breast and throat. Mrs. Minnerton threw an arm about her, and the Duchess made her way to them.

"My love," she said, tenderly, "come away, the carriage is waiting us."

She rose and suffered herself to be led through the dense mass of human beings, who draw back to allow her to pass through their very midst.

She was conscious of words of pity, and of shoutings as she went out, but she scarcely seemed to notice these things, and entering the carriage, hid her face from her friends, crying as if her heart were breaking. They left her in peace, and the Duchess gave orders to return to her own house in Prince's Gardens.

Surely that day Jean's wrongs were in a measure avenged!

The next morning her Grace smiled as she read the following paragraph in the *Morning Post* :—

"On leaving the Court, Miss Munro was greeted with hissing and groans. The mob broke the windows of her carriage, and she escaped only through the exertions of the police. The maid, Jenny Baldwin, contrived to elude the infuriated people, and effected her escape by a back way."

"Learning that Lady Greatorex had not returned to her own residence, they then proceeded to it, and smashed the greater number of the windows, and otherwise disfigured the house, calling the whole while for Lord Greatorex, who, however, did not appear. They were with great difficulty dispersed."

"Great sympathy is felt for the unfortunate lady, and Mr. Ormsby was made the subject of an ovation."

The Duchess handed the paper to her pale companion.

Jean read the notice with listless eyes; it seemed to her that nothing could be good with her any more, that no future pleasure could teach her forgetfulness of the past terrible months.

There was no flash of triumph on her perfect face as she looked up at her friend, only a deep silent pain and weariness, infinitely more pathetic than tears or sobs.

"Say something, Jean," urged her Grace. "Surely you should be glad that your cause is so warmly espoused by all classes of people!"

"Glad!" Jean said, bitterly, "and for why? What cause for gratification is there in public opinion? It is ever changing and shifting; and if yesterday the case had gone against me, all who now pity would be railing against me!"

Who would believe me innocent? Who would stretch out a friendly hand to me? Oh, it is a cruel world—a cruel world! would to Heaven I might leave it to-day!"

"You will know happiness yet, my child; and it should be some satisfaction to you that your enemies are foiled in their diabolical plots against you. Were I in your position I should openly rejoice in Valentine Munro's discomfiture."

"My lady" rose.

"Hush!" she said in an undertone. "Do not speak to me of her; her very name rouses me to such hatred that I am frightened!"

"Sit down, Jean; I want to talk to you of your future, and I will try to remember that her name is tabooed. What are you going to do with regard to Lord Greatorex?"

Jean shivered, and was silent a moment; then she said in a hard voice,—

"I cannot return to him. His conduct has rendered all my marriage vows null and void. Oh! I wish with all my heart I had married a man in my own rank—or, better still, that I had never married. But I loved him in those far-away days, and believed him to be a Galahad for purity, a Lancelot for chivalry. Now, I am almost afraid to say it, but my feeling towards him is one of repulsion. I think you will hardly wonder that it is so!"

"Have you made any plans for the future? Of course, no one can expect you to pay Lord Greatorex any wifely submission!"

"I intend consulting Mr. Ballaford to-day as to the possibility of a judicial separation. Surely the law will be on my side!"

"I should say that it would, and I fancy he would have to make you a handsome allowance."

Jean flushed deeply.

"I would not touch one penny of his!" proudly.

"I only ask for freedom. I am not ashamed to gain my own livelihood!"

The Duchess lifted her hands in reprobation. "My dear girl, it would be so incongruous. Just imagine a titled woman accepting a paltry salary for certain half-menial duties! Jean, you must be mad!"

"There would be small wonder if I were; and apparently, my dear friend, you forget I am a plebeian by birth. I would like to impress upon you and all of your acquaintances that we plebeians have pride and courage equal to your own, and very often superior in their elements. Why should a man be proud because he is born in a high estate (that is a mere accident of birth)? Rather let him rejoice if he lifts himself by honest, persistent efforts, from a lowly to a high position. There would be no small merit in such a deed!"

"My dear Jean, don't you think you are a little bit of a Radical?"

"No; my sympathies are with Church and State; but I hold contrary opinions to some of my party. I hope they are more liberal; a bigot does no good to either side."

She moved to a window and looked out.

"How soon can we start for Mr. Ballaford's chambers? I am anxious to know his decision and my fate. And oh! believe, my dear friend, whatever may come, I shall remember you with love and gratitude; that if I spent my life in your service I should still feel myself your debtor, should still pray that I might find some great thing to do for you before I died!"

The Duchess rose and put her arms about Jean, drew down the lovely face, and kissed it.

"My dear, I cannot spare you. If you should succeed in obtaining a separation, you must make your home with me. I am growing old, and require a companion who will also be a daughter to me."

"You are very good!" Jean answered, in a heart-felt tone; "but I could not accept your offer. You must see if I remain with you Mr. Ormsby could not visit here. No, it will be best for me to start afresh, to go to some place where I am unknown, and where my wrongs have not been heard."

"That you shall never do, and there is no necessity for anxiety on Maurice's account; he is going away in a few days. He is hardly himself, and he thinks a trip to the Continent will restore

him to his usual tone. But there, child, we can settle nothing until we have seen Mr. Ballaford."

Later on they drove to the barrister's chambers, and found him deep in the mysteries of a lawsuit; but he pushed aside his papers as they entered and gave them chairs. Jean at once disclosed the object of her visit, whilst Mr. Ballaford listened with a grave and sympathetic face. When she had finished, he said,—

"Lady Greatorox, I am sorry to say there is no remedy for you unless you can swear that Lord Greatorox has personally ill-treated you, and that you go in fear of your life. Can you do this?"

"No," and the white misery on the lovely face touched the barrister's heart to compassion. "Then you will do nothing for me!"

"The law will do nothing; I wish I could give you a different reply. The only thing that remains for you is to endeavour to come to terms with his lordship!"

She sat twisting her slender fingers together, the shadows deepening momentarily on her beautiful eyes; then she burst out suddenly,—

"What terrible disadvantages women labour under. The law refuses us help and protection from the time we give up our freedom to one man until we die. So long as a man does not strike his wife he may claim her when and where he chooses. He may break her spirit, make her daily life a burden almost too grievous to be borne—the law allows it. She has no redress; he may even rob her of her good name, may make her a byword amongst her one-time friends and acquaintances—the law will not interfere. It is only a woman, and there are so many of us. What does it matter if this one dies of a broken heart, or that one, driven to madness, seeks refuge in a suicide's death!"

She was so lovely, so helpless; she had all her life been so kindly, and she had suffered so sorely that Mr. Ballaford's heart ached for her.

"Would you wish me to see his lordship on your behalf?" he queried.

She hesitated a moment, then said,—

"If you would! Oh, if you would! I am incapable of holding any communication with him yet. Tell him I want nothing but my freedom. That if he will let me go I will work for my daily bread, and never trouble him any more. I only ask that I may go my way unmolested."

He thought her little short of an angel; but he merely said,—

"I will try to make the best of terms for your ladyship. I sincerely trust the future holds many good things for you."

"It can have but one good thing for me, and that is death," she said, below her breath, and, bowing, went downstairs with the Duchess.

## CHAPTER VII.

For a few days the fashionable world was left in ignorance of Valentine Munro's whereabouts. Then it began to be rumoured she had left England for America, accompanied by her father and Jenny Baldwin.

For once report told no lies. The Honourable Wilfred Munro was glad to leave his own country behind, until the angry clamourings of his creditors had subsided. He had gone the whole length of his tether, and had little or nothing to offer in liquidation. His name was disgraced further by his daughter, and he felt men eyed him askance in the street, and seemed to shun him.

Valentine's part in the conspiracy had for ever damaged her chances of matrimony in England, and he looked to her to recoup his losses. There was no love between father and daughter; neither were there any terrible scenes. Each depended too much on the other to risk the consequences of a rupture.

Mrs. Munro, a feeble, once pretty woman, was left behind with her own friends, who, anxious to rid themselves of such undesirable connections as Wilfred Munro and Valentine, helped them on their secret journey with as much cash as they could gather together in the course of a few days.

But before they went the woman met her lover, by appointment, in a lonely place. He looked as if he had been drinking for many days. His eyes were bloodshot, and his hands tremulous. If, in all his selfish life, he had really loved any creature but himself, that creature was Valentine. And when he saw her looking fresh and dainty, in a dark-blue costume, he tried to catch her to him with an exclamation of delight. But she evaded him; a cold look in her forget-me-not eyes, a disdainful smile about her lips.

"All that folly is past and over, Frederick!" she said, in her bell-like voice. "I am going away, and it is probable we shall not meet again for many years!"

"You don't mean to say that you are willing to leave me!" he remarked, blankly. "Vall you can't mean that!"

"Don't be foolish. You must see it is impossible for me to remain in the country after the disclosures of the other day. And of what use is it to further compromise myself? You cannot marry me whilst she lives!"

"Curse her!" he muttered, between his clenched teeth. "Vall! why were you so foolish as to mention names in your letter?"

"I am not immaculate!" she retorted, in a flash of passion, because she knew she had brought about the present failure by her own carelessness. "How could I forsake Jenny would lose it! How could I guess we, in our turn, were being spied upon? Oh! I should like to do 'my lady' one ill turn before I go."

"What am I to do if you leave me?" he questioned, ignoring her last words. "I will follow you, Vall, from place to place!"

"That would be madness! No, we part to-day, for ever!—unless some lucky chance removes Jean Greatorox from our way."

"You can go without a tear, without a regret. Did you ever love me? Have you been deceiving me all along?"

"You should have known me better than to express such a doubt of me!" she answered, with lowered lids. "And you must see, Fred, no other course is left us. My life is very miserable; but I have tried to be brave for your sake. Do not rob me of my courage now, when I so sorely need it."

And she applied a filmy handkerchief to her eyes.

"Don't cry, love!" he whispered. "I did not mean to hurt you; but you looked so bright and—so trim, I thought the suffering had been all mine. You will at least write to me, Valentine!"

"Yes, oh, yes!" apparently struggling with some great emotion. "Oh, Fred! you will return to her; and she, being a good woman, will forgive you, and teach you to forget poor Valentine, whose only claim upon you is her love for you. You will, perhaps, hate me, because for a while I came between you and the woman you once loved, and will love again."

He took her in his arms.

"I shall return to her!" he answered, hoarsely; "but she will rue the day in which I do so. I will make her life so bitter that she will wish herself dead. I will crush her spirit; bend her will to mine."

He paused suddenly, then added,—

"Keep a good heart, Valentine; we shall yet be happy together!"

They stood talking together for a long, long time. Then she said she must be going; and, though Greatorox was reluctant to part with her, she insisted.

"Kiss me!" he said, as she sought to slip from his embrace, "kiss me!"

There was nothing to lose by granting that caress, in the future there might be much to gain; so she lifted her lips to his and kissed him, then went homewards through the tender gloaming of a warm April evening.

On the following day she and her father left Liverpool for New York, and Greatorox cast about in his own mind how he could best revenge himself upon Jean.

He was not ready-witted, and whilst he waited for an inspiration, and thought over Mr. Ballaford's proposals on "my lady's" behalf, Maurice

Ormsby was making preparations for his tour. When they were all concluded, he went to his godmother's to acquaint her with the date of his departure, and to wish her good-bye for an indefinite period.

Her Grace received him cordially, and bade him take a seat between herself and Jean. The latter flashed painfully, then looked wistfully towards the dark, stern-faced man who had suffered so sorely for her sake. He was so changed, so haggard, as to be the very ghost of his former self. There were deep lines upon his brow, and silver threads in the dark hair; and when she saw these things her woman's pity taught her to forget her embarrassment, and, rising, she gave him her hand in frank welcome. Under her touch he trembled, and his heart leapt within him at the first notes of the sad, sweet voice he might perhaps never hear again. He sat down in silence beside her. The Duchess was the first to speak.

"When do you start, Maurice?"

"To-morrow, aunt. I hope to reach Calais by night. I mean to do France, Italy and Germany. I may even leave Europe for awhile. A party of men I know are going a voyage to the Cape; I may join them."

He spoke feverishly, and seemed ill at ease. After that one searching glance into Jean's violet eyes he had not ventured to look at her. She sat, her hands folded upon her lap, listening to, but never sharing in, the conversation.

Half-an-hour passed by quickly, and then, a visitor being announced, the Duchess went out, leaving Jean and Maurice alone together. He strove desperately to find some common-place subject on which to converse, but failed; they had shared too heavy a trouble to stand upon an easy or familiar footing. As is usual in such cases, the woman was the first to speak.

"I cannot make you understand, Mr. Ormsby, how great a grief it is to me that I should send you into exile. Oh! wavering and striving to hide her pain from him, "the shame and anguish is so great, so fresh upon me still, that I dare scarcely meet your eyes! For the trouble I have brought upon you you would hate me were you as most men are; but you are merciful and generous!" She paused, and still he dared not look at her because he knew there were tears in her eyes as there had been in her voice. Oh! how he loved her! How cruel it was to hold his peace! to go away in silence and alone!

Jean put out one hand and touched him.

"Only say you forgive me; that I have not spoiled your life! Men know you are innocent, and will delight to honour you. As for me, I ask nothing but for the world to leave me alone—to let me live and die in peace! Perhaps when your indignation and your pain are less you will return to England, and in the happiness which surely must await you, you will find ample recompense. Oh! I pray that you may, with all my heart, with all my soul!"

As she leaned towards him, and he felt the pressure of that slender, white hand his strength forsook him; he lifted his wild eyes and haggard face.

"Jean!" he entreated, "for Heaven's sake don't speak to me in that tone!" and in the moment of silence that followed she learned he loved her. She threw out her hands with a passionate, pitiful gesture. She sank on her knees beside the couch, and hid her eyes from him.

He rose, and seemed to tower above her. For just a little while his passion mastered him, and he spoke swiftly, and with fierce self-condemnation.

"Hear me a moment, Jean. I ask no more of you but that you will listen patiently. Heaven knows I have striven always to hide my love from you, that until now I have succeeded. I have not been blind to its unheliness; I have never forgotten your wifehood, or the dignity with which it invested you. At first I pitied you, and I cannot now tell you when my pity changed to love. If it will take away from the sting such a confession must have for you, believe me I have always loved you as 'men love heaven,' have revered and honoured you, too highly even in thought, to associate your name



with mine, or link your life to one so unworthy as mine. I am going away, and I shall not trouble you any more; only remember that if you ever need assistance you have but to call upon me. Remember, too, that I shall never repent this hour's madness which I trust for your sake and for mine, you will forget. I should like to know my name is not all forgotten in your prayers. I should be glad to believe you will one day forgive me, but that I dare not hope."

His voice died suddenly out; she lifted her weary head, and turning her face upon him, as she still knelt, bared into a flood of tears.

"Oh!" she cried, in sobbing breaths. "I do forgive you—now and freely; but you must go away at once; it is better so, better so." She suddenly rose, and stretched out her hands to him. "Good-bye, good-bye!" she sighed, "my prayers and my blessings go with you always; and may you learn forgetfulness of me."

As she stood there in the full blaze of sunshine, her hair gleaming like an aureole about her pale and tender face, as he touched her slender fingers a great dread came upon him, that he was looking his last upon her; that when he returned it would be to learn that she, the life of his life, was dead. He bowed low over her hand and kissed it reverentially, then she drew away from him, and he watched her go from the room, with eyes made dim by anguish. For him the night had fallen, and he feared no dawn would ever glid its skies.

When the Duchess joined him she asked surprisedly for Jean. He answered incoherently; then, after a pause,—

"Let me go now, aunt, I am as weak as a child; this parting is worse than I dreamed. I leave her to you; oh! be good to her," and with that he went his way.

As he left the house behind, it seemed to him he was saying a final farewell to all that ever had, or ever could, make life glad. His voluntary exile had never seemed to him so terrible as in that one hour of supreme anguish; yet he never faltered in his resolution to put long miles between himself and Jean. After his mad confession it was impossible for them to meet as of old, and he could not hold her reputation and honour in too high esteem. So he turned his back upon friends and old familiar scenes; old associations, old memories, clung about him, and made his strong heart grow faint within him, and to himself he said,—

(Continued on page 520.)

## ONLY AN ORPHAN WAIF.

### CHAPTER I.

The great market-wagon of Arnold White, farmer, stood at the door of Mrs. Wilson's boarding-house, and Arnold White himself stood at the door loaded with butter, eggs, chickens, and a great bunch of lilacs.

Every week Arnold White came into the city of Chichester from his farm and carried to regular customers their weekly supply of farm produce.

Mrs. Wilson was a regular customer, and Arnold had heard before the sounds that on this particular Friday afternoon made him grind his teeth hard, and mutter savagely, for so calm-tempered a man:

"She's at it again! I wonder how long I can stand it! And the little one looks like Susy!"

The sounds he heard were those of a harsh voice scolding violently, a weak, plaintive one sobbing, and blows falling.

"I'll teach you to smash everything in the house," cried the woman.

"But that big meat dish is so heavy," sobbed the childish tones, "and it was all soapy!"

"Poor little one!" muttered Arnold, and then strode noisily into the kitchen, saying,—

"Your door was open, Mrs. Wilson, so I came straight in!"

"Left the street door open, did you?" said the woman, to the shrinking child. "I'll teach you to do it again!"

"Oh!" thought Arnold White, remorsefully; "think of my getting her into trouble! But she shall not have that lesson."

Then, with much bargaining and fault-finding on Mrs. Wilson's part, the weekly supply of butter and eggs was purchased.

Several times Arnold White looking at the child, saw her eyes fastened upon the bunch of lilacs, with her whole face in a glow of delight. And it seemed to him that the pleasure marked more strongly the pitiful, haggard countenance than its usual expression of shrinking terror.

Never had Mrs. Wilson obtained all her reductions in price so easily, for the farmer was conning a great scheme, and forming a resolution.

After the purchases were all made, the woman left the kitchen for her money, and Arnold White, stooping his tall form till his lips nearly touched the child's ear, whispered,—

"Would you like to go where there are great bushes of flowers like those, and chickens, and green grass, and where nobody will ever strike you?"

"Oh!" gasped the child, apparently stunned by the suggestion.

"If you would," the whisper continued, "slip out to my wagon, climb in, and hide in the empty bags you will see there."

The child gave him one quick glance. Over her poor little starved heart rushed the memories of kind words, gentle pats, and presents of apples and nuts from the kindly-faced farmer, and nodding she sped through the entry.

Just in time, for Mrs. Wilson returned a moment later. She paid the farmer, who detained her purposely by some difficulty about change, until he thought his protégée was securely hidden. Then he said innocently,—

"Where's the little girl? I brought her a bunch of lilacs. Why, she was here a minute ago!"

"She's up to some mischief. I'll find her."

"I don't think you will!" Arnold thought; but aloud he said: "Well, I'll leave the posies for her!" and picking up his butter box and basket, went leisurely across the entry, and presently drove slowly from the door. He had half doubted if the child was in the wagon, so completely had she hidden herself under a pile of empty bags; but when he was beyond the street where Mrs. Wilson lived a good safe distance, he said,—

"Don't you want to come and sit by me, Florrie? Your name is Florrie, isn't it?"

"Yes, sir," said a faint little voice, and a closely-cropped head peeped out from the bags; "but I didn't put on my hat."

"Dear me! didn't you? Well, we must buy one."

"Oh, no! Oh, please drive me on fast, fast! She may run after me."

"No, she will not; and she will not catch you if she does. Lie snug if you are afraid, and I'll buy the hat."

A hat and little shawl being purchased as soon as a suitable shop was reached, Florrie put them on, and looking timidly on all sides, took her seat on the front seat of the great wagon.

"There!" said her protector, "if Mrs. Wilson runs after you, she will have to climb on the horses' back to see you. Now we have a long ride to take, Florrie, and Dot and Dimple are tired, so they will not go very fast; so if you get sleepy you can lie down on the bags again."

"Are the horses named Dot and Dimple?" Florrie asked. "Our horses—papa's, you know, before he died and I went to the almshouse—were Castor and Pollux, and they went so fast, so fast the wind nearly blew my curls off. I had long curls then, and mamma curled them herself when Nanette dressed me. But after papa died we never went in the Park to drive again, and mamma sewed all day, and we lived in a nasty little room up over so many stairs; and then mamma died, and a man took me to the work-house, and Mrs. Wilson took me out. Oh," and the large brown eyes filled, "nobody ever struck me when mamma lived."

"And nobody shall ever strike you while I live,"

said Arnold, having swallowed a lump in his throat that choked him while the child told her story. "Can you tell me all your name, Florrie, and how old you are?"

"My name is Florrie Ashton, and I am ten years old."

"And will you stay with me and be my little sister? I had a dear little sister, named Susy, who had brown eyes like yours. But she died, and my mother and I have had no little girl to love for three years."

"And will you love me?"

"I am sure I shall."

"I should like to stay. But I might be a trouble."

"We'll risk that."

It was a sleeping child that Arnold White lifted from the wagon and carried to his mother when he reached home. Few words were needed to rouse her sympathy after she had looked at the painfully wasted form, the pale face, and the scars of cruel treatment on the tender flesh. And a new life opened for Florrie—a life of quiet happiness, of perfect health; and an atmosphere of love that was better than all.

### CHAPTER II.

"But you love me! I am sure you love me!"

The speaker was a handsome man of stylish appearance, fashionably dressed; and as he looked into Florrie Ashton's beautiful face his eyes were full of tenderness. She was very pale, and there was a deadly chill at her heart as she said, steadily,—

"I am deeply grateful to you, Mr. St. Maur. You have been my kind friend and teacher for five long summers, and I can never thank you as I wish. But you must have seen that Arnold White loves me, and I have promised to be his wife."

"A common farmer?"

"A good, noble man, worthy of the deepest devotion! I owe him everything; almost my life!"

"But you, with your talent, cannot live on in farm drudgery all your life! I am rich, I can take you abroad. You will see Italy; study under great artists; far surpass the little I have taught you. And you do not love Arnold White. You love me! Be true to your own heart!"

"I have never said I loved you," was the reply, in a calm voice. "And I am true to my own heart when I keep faith with Arnold White."

In vain he pleaded. White as death, cold in the hot August air, Florrie was firm in her refusal of all he offered to tempt her. Arnold White loved her. With passionate gratitude filling her heart, Florrie had caught eagerly at the hope of repaying him, by a wife's devotion, for all he had done for her.

When Ernest St. Maur, a summer boarder on the next farm, discovered and developed a decided taste for painting the girl possessed, when he opened to her the world of poetry, art, and literature, lent her books, talked with her, the new life seemed only a return to something she had known before and half forgotten.

There was no doubt that Florrie had been the child of parents of culture and refinement. Her speech, her movements, all betrayed it; and she impressed the young artist at once as a lady.

As she left childhood behind her, his interest deepened into love, but not until he spoke and asked her to be his wife did Florrie know that her heart had been a traitor to her promise, and that she loved Ernest St. Maur as she had never loved Arnold White.

Not for one second did she waver; and her lover left her, convinced at last that his hope had deceived him, while Florrie turned to her home, exhausted by the constraint she had put upon herself; her heart torn by the separation, but constant to her betrothed, never doubting her ability to make him happy.

She knew, and she exulted in the knowledge, that she was the sunlight of the farmhouse. Mrs. White was old, and in frail health, depending greatly upon her adopted child, who

gave her back in fullest measure the loving care bestowed upon her own forlorn childhood; and to Arnold she was the very centre of hope, love, happiness—everything that made life of value.

And never had his love met such quick recognition, never had Florrie been so tender, so careful of his comfort and pleasure, as in the week that followed Ernest St. Maur's departure from the neighbour's farm. It was a dear, a precious recollection to the grateful girl, for there came a day—ah! so soon after—when Arnold White was brought to his own door, dying of injuries received by a fall in his barn. The trap of the loft had given way and thrown him violently to the floor beneath.

A few hours of suffering, and then he said, faintly,—

"Mother!—who will care for mother?"

"I will," Florrie said, quietly, though it was only an iron will that held back the sobs. "You will trust her to me, Arnold?"

Only a look answered her. Speech was gone; but Florrie will carry that look warm in her heart until the grave opens for her. She knew that Arnold did trust her, and over the still, white face, that was all her weeping eyes saw an hour later, she vowed to be faithful to her trust.

She soon found it was no slight burden she had assumed. Mrs. White broke down, utterly prostrated by this last sorrow, in a life that had been one of parting from all she loved—husband and children—until this last prop and comfort of her old age was taken.

The farm was sold, neither woman having the knowledge or strength to take Arnold's place. A tiny cottage was purchased, and the money still left from the sale of the farm gave the old lady an income barely sufficient for necessary food.

Then there came back to her the reward for the deed of charity that, ten years before, had taken the almshouse wail into her home and heart.

Without any wonderful talent, Florrie had a taste for art, and Ernest St. Maur had given her valuable instructions.

After many failures in attempts to sell her pictures she succeeded in obtaining steady work for a large fancy goods house, who sold the hand-painted ornamental work, then first coming into fashion. Easter banners, pincushions, bottle covers, plush tidies, satin and velvet in a hundred forms did Florrie ornament with flowers, birds, and butterflies, pretty devices of all kinds. The price would have scarcely supported her in a town, but in her modest home it was an addition to the small income that gave Mrs. White every comfort, and enabled both to live well in their quiet, unpretentious way.

A year after Arnold died Ernest St. Maur once more tried to win Florrie for his wife, and once more failed. It was a hard struggle between love and gratitude; but one sentence the lover used made it easier. He said,—

"There is the workhouse provided for destitute old women!"

And Florrie answered,—

"And for orphaned children. Never will I send to its cold charity the tender, loving old woman who rescued me."

And a few months afterwards Ernest St. Maur married. But Florrie's labour of love lasted many years. Mrs. White lived to be a very old woman, losing in the last years of her life all knowledge of what surrounded her, a paralyzed, imbecile weight. But a weight upon hands that never faltered—a heart that never turned away.

When she died, Florrie inherited the cottage and what income she left, by a will made soon after Arnold's death. There she lives, doing what good she can, a useful "old maid," as she terms herself, though but little past thirty. Love may come into her life again but she is happy without it, regretting nothing of what she has sacrificed to duty and gratitude.

By the passage of salt through the body the absorption of food is stimulated, and the activity of tissue changes and growth is increased.

## HIDDEN FROM ALL EYES.

—30—

### CHAPTER XLV.—(continued.)

"I WOULD rather be just the reverse," muttered Godfrey, with a passionate glance at the pale, proud face beside him. "After all," in a louder tone, "what is there in the tie of blood? It may hold you tight when you don't want it, but it is sure to snap under pressure. It may give you a warm enough welcome when you can meet on even ground, but I should be sorry to trust to it for so much as a dinner, if I hadn't a penny to buy a crust of bread."

"Wouldn't you come to us if you were in trouble?" asked Meta, in dismay.

"Depends how far I had gone," with a mockery of a smile.

"But surely you would run a better chance with us than with anyone else!"

"Lose your respectability, and a relation instantly regards you as a pot of pitch which he is afraid of touching for fear of being defiled."

"My dear boy," expostulated Sir Edward, "are you judging from your own experience?"

"Experience! No. That belongs to the past."

"Then these are pleasant anticipations for the future?"

"More probable than pleasant."

There was a pause; to some the words had a hidden meaning, to others a melancholy foreboding. Meta's spirits sank as she remembered the conversation of the morning; Mr. Mallon's roan, as he thought that Somerville's disgrace meant his own acquittal. There was something so strange about his behaviour that he was almost tempted to fancy that he was on the point of giving up the game.

It might be due to Miss Maynard's influence—who was certainly in his confidence. She would not be likely to countenance a fraud, but unless she promised herself as the reward, no man on earth would run headlong to ruin at the mere bidding of a woman's voice. She had vowed that she hated him; but that might be only a feminine way of concealing love before the important question had been asked. There was certainly a gentleness in her manner towards Somerville this evening, very different to her usual conduct; and the red flower in her breast was a flat contradiction of her former assertion that she never wished to wear his favourite colours. Still he had always stuck to his conviction that she was in love with Vere, and it was difficult to give it up. A woman must be utterly bereft of sense to have her choice of either, and not choose the frank, true-hearted soldier, instead of that intriguing, dissipated-looking man of the world.

"You are going to ride Limerick to-morrow?" Godfrey asked suddenly. "I was looking at him to-day; he couldn't be in better condition."

"I shan't take him out at all; the temptation would be too great."

"How do you mean? You are not going to funk?"

"Certainly not; but Sir Edward doesn't wish me to follow."

"I never knew you so meek before," with his habitual sneer.

"You don't know what it costs me," raising her eyebrows disconsolately.

"You must come. I won't go without you."

"What nonsense you talk!" drawing away from him coldly. "My absence won't spoil the run."

"It will play the deuce with everything. You shall come. Remember it is the last time."

"I don't know that; but if it is, I can't help it; Sir Edward won't let me."

"What is that! Making me out a hard-hearted tyrant!" asked the Baronet, with his cheery smile.

"I was only saying—" began Nella, but Godfrey interposed.

"Is it true that you won't allow her to hunt?"

"Quite true. Do you want her to break her neck?"

"No more chance of it for her than for the

whole lot of us. She rode splendidly. Ask Deyncourt, Grainger—any of them."

"I saw how well she went with my own eyes, no need to ask anyone else. But, remembering what it has cost us," his voice growing husky, as he thought of his little girl who started so full of health and spirits, brought back cold and still on a hurdle, "I should have thought you were the last person to advise it."

"No reason why it should happen again!" he muttered, crossly.

"Are you going to ride Pearl?" asked Meta, forgivingly, though she was rather hurt that Godfrey never asked if she would be at the meet.

"No—Dandy," he said, shortly.

"I thought you were keeping Pearl on purpose."

"Then you thought wrong."

"Won't you take her out for the last time?" Nella inquired, in a low voice.

"No. I have other work for her to do. Did you think I could leave her behind?"

"Then you are going?"

"I am not going to stay here to be hooted at."

"And when time has softened everything, you will come back?"

"Why should I?"

"For Meta's sake."

"She wouldn't have anything to say to me, Nella," looking at her almost fiercely. You must be an angel to me to-night and to-morrow, or I never shall have the pluck to go through with it."

"Oh, Godfrey, pray for strength," she said tremulously, "and it will be sure to be given you."

"I do!" he exclaimed, with passionate blasphemy. "Your eyes are my only heaven."

With a shudder he looked forward to the morrow. If his courage failed the task would devolve upon her.

### CHAPTER XLVI.

THE morning broke cheerfully; a brisk wind from the north-west scattered the clouds, and a bright sun made every damp blade of grass, and every wet sprig in the thicket, glitter with the rays of the diamond.

Vere rode by Sir Edward's side, listening to the usual melancholy forebodings of a keen sportsman, who is sure to fancy that the scent won't lie, or else a fox won't be found because he is heart and soul in the day's sport.

Mr. Mallon followed with Godfrey Somerville—an ill-assorted pair—whose hopes ran in diametrically opposite directions.

Each was too much occupied with his own concerns to think of the other, although Godfrey, unaware of his actual presence beside him, was wishing he could mount Victor Maltrevers on the worst horse in his uncle's stables, and see him break his neck before his eyes.

"If he were done for Nella might let me off," he thought ruefully, as Dandy picked his way daintily through the mud, and a knot of pink coats appeared in the distance. "Halloa!" he exclaimed, presently, "there's Miss Arkwright. I never expected she would be out to-day."

"Didn't you? I did."

"Perhaps you had superior information!"

"Where should I get it from?" facing round upon him at once.

"From her special friend, Vere."

"He is an old friend, that's all."

"Most people say he is going to marry her, so I don't call that 'all'!"

"Then most people tell a falsehood!" the blood rushing in his face.

"Or you are in the dark, which is more likely."

"I don't agree with you," he flung.

"Do as you like. I never went in for her myself."

"Do you think she would speak to you?"

"She might, if I gave her the chance. She will have to, by-the-bye, this evening, when I go to her mother's house. It rather amuses me, but they could not give me up, on account of my belongings."

"I should fancy Miss Arkwright was capable



of taking her own line and sticking to it," his eyes fixed longingly on the lovely face which was turned to his for an instant in brief recognition. The two men raised their hats as Dalcie pulled up her horse by Sir Edward's side.

"She hates me like poison, but she has not the courage to cut me. Vere, I conclude, will give her a lead, and you will follow to pick up the pieces. Thank goodness I've no one to look after but myself! By Jove, they're off!"

Dandy bounded forward, and relieved Mr. Mallon of his master's presence.

Unlike Sir Edward, he did not care "a hang," as he expressed it to himself, about the day's sport, so long as he got Dalcie to himself in a quiet corner.

His opportunity came, for the first fox was chopped in a wood, and whilst everyone else was in a fever of impatience, they had the chat they wished for by the cover-side.

"No news, I suppose!" she said, softly, as her eyes roamed in every direction, to be sure that they were not watched.

"Glorious news, I trust," and his dark eyes shone with joy. "At three o'clock this morning everything will be decided."

Her face grew deadly pale.

"How?"

Sorrow had become so habitual to her that hope seemed almost bewildering, and she could scarcely speak.

He told her all he knew, and she listened breathlessly.

"You think you are sure to find her?"

"I am sure of it. This is worth waiting for," he said, hoarsely.

"Oh, Heaven! can it be true?" and she bent her head to hide her face.

"Bear up, dear, don't give way. That fiend Somerville is somewhere about."

"I feel such a fool, as if I must cry; so idiotic of me when I've been like a stone before," and she turned her face like an April day towards him.

"I try to school myself not to hope too much," he said, gravely. "Your mother might not care to have a marked man for her son-in-law."

"Then she would have to do without a daughter," in a shy whisper.

"Through good and evil report, nothing has made a difference to you!"

"No, nor ever would, so long as you remained yourself. I'm not to break my neck to-day!"

"No; for Heaven's sake, take care," looking at her in alarm, as if Brakespore were not standing as quietly as a lamb.

"I'm going to be as careful as any old woman to-day. There was a time once when Jack used to stick to me like a leech, because he fancied that I wanted to come to grief. He knows better now."

"But you haven't told him who I am!"

"Not for the world. He would have been so wild with joy that the first person he met would have asked him what was the matter; but he has got an absurd idea into his head that I am going to console myself with Captain Vere, so he is quite comfortable."

"More than I am," with a smile. "Such a fright as I look, he takes me at a horrid disadvantage."

"You have your eyes left," looking up at them fondly.

"Scarcely to be seen under these bushes of eyebrows. I feel such an awful sweep, and Dandys will scarcely allow me to wash my face for fear of interfering with my complexion."

"It would be a pity. How shall we ever get through this evening!" her tone changing.

"We must manage it somehow. You will have to make much of me, for it may be my last."

"If I thought that I would pray for heart disease or something else to kill me quick," her lips trembling; "but you don't think you will fall!"

"On my honour I don't. The three ladies and the old gentleman are to go in the landau, we three men in the brougham. The under-coachman is to be induced to take too much, and my man George will drive. Coming home

we get rid of Somerville if we can; if not, we take him with us. After all, it might be as well to have him under our own eye. I don't know, though, it would be dangerous. We will leave him behind, if possible. Drive round by Nan's Tower, where I have three men already on the watch, draw up at a little distance, send the carriage away, down another road, get out and hide in the bushes on either side of the doorway, and make a rush for it as soon as a petticoat appears."

Her face was flushed with excitement as she listened with parted lips, and her heart beat wildly.

"Oh, if I could only be there!"

"You would be terribly in the way. Be ready to welcome me when I come back with the lost Robin in my arms."

"You will let me know at once?"

"I'll bring you the news myself—if good."

"It must be good; Providence couldn't be unkind to us."

"I don't know about that," said Victor, reverently. "He offers us a Heaven."

"But are you anxious to go, there!" with raised eyebrows, as she thought how much better he was than herself.

"Not at all," he said, promptly, "so long as I have a chance of you for my wife on earth. Hush—hush!" as the horn too-wooded loudly from the inner recesses of the wood. "They're moving off, and we must be after them. What an ardent sportsman I am, to be sure!"

Godfrey Somerville rode that day as if he had made up his mind that he did not wish to see another. Even the straightest goers shrugged their shoulders, and said if the fellow had no pity for himself he ought to have some for his horse.

But Dandy was equal to everything, and, entering into the spirit of his rider, never refused the most impracticable of bullfinches or the wildest of water-jumps.

With a white, stern face he followed close in the wake of the hounds, though the pace was tremendously fast, never striving either to spare his horse or himself when an opportunity offered.

The rest of the field were left far behind, and there were only two or three in at the finish; but he was amongst them, close on the master's heels.

Vere was well up near the front, but Mallon was nowhere to be seen, and Sir Edward had found out that he was no longer so young as he used to be.

Slowly and, by his own choice, alone Godfrey rode home, the rays of the sunset at his back, the darkness of the future glowering like a thunderstorm in front of him.

"Hard lines," he thought to himself, as he pondered over his luckless position. "If I had been a prosperous country gentleman, with a fat purse and a pretty wife, ten to one I should have come a cropper over the first hedge, and broken my neck decently. I'm sure I did my best to do for myself, and Dandy, too; but it was no use. I'm not allowed to kill myself, and no accident will happen to me. Suppose I'm reserved for the gallows when I've committed a big enough sin to deserve them. Hold up, you brute!" as the tired horse stumbled; "I'm not anxious for broken bones if I can't be finished off entirely."

Nature had made him physically perfect, and before his mind was soured by trouble he used to be proud of his own well-moulded proportions. Now he only cared to be superior to that "ugly fellow, Mallon," and not inferior to Vere in Nella's eyes.

Meta was standing in the hall waiting for him when he came in, after leaving his horse in the stables, where he stopped to scold Peter for not having appeared at the right time with his second mount.

"Here you are," she exclaimed, with a sigh of relief. "I was beginning to get so nervous."

"Rather late to begin. It's not the first time I've been out with the hounds."

"No; but my father said you weren't riding like yourself," looking up into his face with anxious eyes. "He said it was just as if you had set your heart on breaking your neck."

"You see I didn't manage it," throwing his

crop on the hall table, and seeming more bothered than pleased by her soliloquy.

"No; but you should be more careful," with gentle gravity. "Remember poor Lina."

"Don't you think it would be better taste to drop that?" with an angry scowl. "Since you and I have talked of marrying, you had better let her be."

The tears sprang to her eyes. "I know she would have wished it. It isn't as if I were taking you from her."

"Not at all!" sarcastically. "And yet I might have posed for the rest of my life as her disconsolate lover; and every eccentricity would have been put down to that—and forgiven."

"Everything you do is always forgiven," she said, with spirit. "My father and mother they are always on your side, and no one goes against you—except perhaps Nella," she added, reluctantly.

"She shan't go against me to-night," setting his teeth resolutely. "Tell her to come here; I want to speak to her."

"I don't know if she has finished her tea," wondering at his manner, and not at all admiring it. "By-the-by, I never thanked you for the lovely bouquet I found in my room."

"Prize it, put it under a glass-case, or wrap it up in wadding; it is the last you will ever get."

"Godfrey!" in dismay.

"Ah, Godfrey! you may say that one day when I shan't be here!" Then he turned away from her, took up a small wooden box which had just come down from London, and went into the library.

# CHAPTER XLVII.

"Meta tells me that you want me," said Nella, hovering on the edge of the door-mat.

"Come in, and shut the door."

"No, thanks, my tea is getting cold."

"All right, if you want the whole household to hear me. Perhaps Vere is within earshot; if so, he will be edified."

"He has retired to his own room, and so has Mr. Mallon, both too muddy to make an appearance."

"I'm muddy enough too," looking down on his boots, which were well bespattered; "but I'm only waiting to give you these flowers. Are you afraid to come in, and look at them?"

"Not at all; but I'm so sorry you've taken so much trouble," with a glance at the Covent-garden address on the outside of the box, "for I really couldn't wear them."

"What flowers have you got on your dress?"

"Lovely Gloires de Dijon, which Lady Somerville gave me. You see red wouldn't go with them at all."

"Would these?" lifting the lid of the box, and taking out an exquisite spray of roses, and a bouquet to match. "You took it for granted they were red," enjoying the surprise in her face; "but I wouldn't have you wear the same as Meta. Camellias are stupid things, but roses have tongues." He held them up, and stepping forward she bent her face over them in involuntary admiration. "Place them close to your heart, and hold them to your lips. They will tell you that a man's passion is no child's play. It is the only thing that could console a man for the loss of his honour!"

"And you must lose it all—poor Godfrey!"

"You don't pity me—you only remember that I've been a brute to you, and you are delighted to think you will be rid of me!" watching her face with keen, though half-closed eyes.

"I pity you from the bottom of my heart, and I will wear your flowers this evening," a winning smile breaking over her face; "and be glad to think you gave them to me as a sign we parted friends. Good-bye," with a little nod.

"Stay," he said, hoarsely. "This is the last time we meet together in this house. I love you with my whole heart and soul," his eyes glowing like living coals, "and I don't care who hears me!"

"Hush! hush! think of Meta!" and, catching up his flowers, she ran out of the room and across the hall, scared at the utter recklessness of his bearing.

When she reached the landing at the top of the stairs she stopped to regain her breath.

Cyril Vere was standing straight in front of her. He pointed to the roses.

"Who gave you these?" sternly, as if their beauty were an offence to him.

"Mr. Somerville."

"And what does he expect in return?"

"Nothing, except that I should wear them," recovering her composure at a jump.

"And you will wear them?"

"Certainly, they are much too good to be wasted."

"Yes, wear his roses—steal him from the poor simple girl who loves him," he said, slowly. "Sell yourself, body and soul, to the devil! I wish to Heaven I had never seen you!"

Then he dashed to the ground the one lovely Marshal Niel he was carrying, and trod it under foot viciously, inwardly dubbing himself a fool for the half-crown he had spent on it.

Then he went downstairs with his nose in the air, and she went slowly back to her room, knowing that she would have willingly given up every rose in her hand for one leaf of the broken blossom which was lying outside on the carpet.

She flung the flowers down on her bed, and paced the room restlessly.

Cyril had no business to speak to her like that, when he had never done anything but snub her ever since he had been in the house. She had looked forward to his visit as the acme of bliss, and what had it brought her! Nothing but pain.

From the first he had chosen to fancy that she was in love with Godfrey Somerville—a poor compliment, when he told her at the same time that he was unworthy of any woman's friendship.

From the first he had never given her a chance, but always condemned her without a trial, at the same time flirting with Miss Arkwright to such an extent that the whole county had decided they were going to make a match.

Godfrey Somerville was no gentleman, in spite of birth and education; he had treated Meta in a shameful manner, offering his hand to the heiress, and making love to another girl behind her back.

He had treated her (Nella) about as badly as he could, rude and insolent so long as he disliked her, and only pretending a violent passion for her when he knew that it would disgust her to the last degree.

He had done his best to ruin her happiness out of selfish spite; he had fomented her when she had gone out of her way to do him good; and now he chose every opportunity of making her feel a traitor to the girl whom she loved like a sister.

She had spoken the truth when she said that she hated him, but a woman's heart is always open to compassion, and in the hour of his despair she pitied him.

"I won't be dictated to," she vowed to herself, with the hot blood rushing to her cheeks. "Just for to-night I will be kind to him, and then I shall never see him again. It can't do any harm. To-morrow will be such a terrible day for him. I couldn't bear to be cruel on the last night."

Her reflections were interrupted by a knock at the door, and Meta came in, looking pale and unhappy.

"What is the matter, dear?" asked Nella, affectionately, her own troubles forgotten in a moment.

"I don't know," and Meta sank disconsolately into a chair.

"Yes, you do. Tell me at once. You never have any secrets from me," sitting down by her on the floor, and taking her hand.

"I expect it is all nonsense. You would only laugh at me."

"Not if you are really bothered. Is it about Mr. Somerville?"

"Yes," in a low voice. "I don't believe he cares for me a bit."

"He has always been fond of you."

She moved her foot impatiently.

"Yes, as a cousin—what's that?"

"And now he's sorry," the corners of her mouth drooping.

"If he is it is because he knows he is not worthy of you. He is quite right—he never was."

"I—I was never half good enough for him, and he sees it!" the tears dropping slowly down her cheeks. "Oh! Nella! if I had been more like you he would have liked me better!"

"He used to hate me!"

"But does he now?"

This was a difficult question, and Nella was obliged to lean her chin on her hand and reflect a little before answering. She wanted to be perfectly honest, and yet it was awkward.

"My dear," she said, slowly, after a pause, "he is a man for whom I never had the smallest respect. He knew it and it made him angry. He suspected that I liked my cousin much more than himself, and he was jealous, not out of love," she added, quickly, "but from the meanest sort of hatred; and so he took to picking flowers for me, and paying me all sorts of attentions on purpose to annoy Cyril. It wasn't nice of him, was it?"

"No, but are you sure that's all?" very dubiously.

"Not quite. He tries to flirt with me sometimes, but he knows that I hate him; and I am only kinder to him now because I think he is unhappy. Oh! Meta dear, I would give anything to make you love him less!"

"Why?" drawing back anxiously.

"Because I see such sorrow in store for you."

"Perhaps you want him for yourself?"

"Not if he were the last man left in the world!" she exclaimed scornfully. "If you can think such a thing as that, I can't talk to you!"

"Oh, Nella, forgive me!" holding her hands tight. "I didn't mean it, but I am nearly out of my mind with thinking."

"Poor little thing! you would never be happy if you married him."

"Nothing shall prevent me!"

"Not even," hesitatingly, "if you thought he did not love you quite enough!"

"No; when he saw how I worshipped him he would be sure to love me more. Why did you say he was unhappy?" still feeling uncomfortable at Nella's superior knowledge.

"Can't you see it for yourself?"

"Yes; but you seemed to know about it."

"Perhaps he will tell us soon, till then we must wait; but, Meta dear," looking up earnestly into her face, "watch him carefully and see if he is the sort of man you could really trust your future to. Can you respect him? Can you feel that he would help you to be better—that you could trust him always to do what was right and honourable, even when your back was turned and you couldn't see?"

"Of course I could!" with a burst of tears.

"I shouldn't love him a bit if I didn't."

She got up from her lowly seat feeling that her efforts were thrown away.

"Then it is no use talking about it. Dry your eyes quick, or you will look a fright this evening."

Meta obeyed. As she came up to give her a kiss she caught sight of the flowers on the bed.

"Oh! what exquisite roses! Where did they come from?"

"Like yours, from Covent Garden," pouring some water in a basin, and putting them in without much care.

"But these are lovely!"

"I don't suppose he chose them. Yours, I presume, are his favourite colour!"

"Of course—if you mean Godfrey's. I thought these came from Captain Vere!"

"Cyril couldn't afford it, poor fellow! He bought me one, so he did think of me,"—with the deepest sigh.

"Where is it?"

"He never gave it me. It's outside—in fragments."

"Why on earth did he pull it to pieces?"

"Because this is the most detestable world that mortals ever had to live in. Go, there's a darling! I want to do my hair before dinner."

She also wanted to escape a humiliating burst of tears, which she felt was imminent; but her mood changed so soon as Meta had gone, and it

was with a cold smile that she looked down on the fragrant blossoms which brought summer into her room in the midst of cold December. If the roses had tongues, as Godfrey said, they could only tell her of a love that she must not listen to; and the only blossom that might have spoken was thrown away by the hand that ought to have given it.

Grieving over shattered hopes, she combed out her beautiful, shining hair, wondering what the coming night would bring forth, without a suspicion of the part she was to play in the proceedings, and envying Dulcie Arkwright even the years of her sufferings, because her lover had been true to her from first to last.

## CHAPTER XLVIII.

"DEAR Lady Somerville! so glad to see you," murmured Dulcie Arkwright, as she pressed her hand; and no one would have guessed, from her calm and graceful bearing, that her heart was beating with the force of fifty hammers, because of a certain red head which had just appeared in the doorway.

Meta came next, with her mother's diamonds on her white neck, and her cousin's red camellias in her hand. Nella followed, with Godfrey's roses on her breast and in her bouquet, but no one noticed them because of the exceeding beauty of the sweet, pale face, with its aureole of shining hair which crowned the whole. Sir Edward beaming, as usual, with a kindly smile on his patrician face, with Vere close behind him, looking so unusually proud and defiant, that Jack scarcely recognized him as his "dear old chum," and then two others—the man she hated more than any other man in the whole earth, and the one she loved.

The tips of the fingers to the first, and only a hurried hand-clasp to the second, whilst ladies that feared to raise themselves dropped quivering on the softness of her cheeks.

There was a buzz of voices round her, but she scarcely heard what they said—scarcely, in fact, knew what she was doing, because of that quaintly distorted figure leaning up against the wall. Victor Maltravers there, under the roof of Deepden Chase! It seemed like one of those horrid, deceitful dreams, which had cheated her night after night into a few minutes of rapture, and only made the succeeding day seem ever so much blanker in consequence.

She roused herself with an effort, saw after partners for those who had not sufficient attractions to get them without a slight amount of outside pressure; introduced eager strangers to the girls they particularly fancied, and let her own card be filled up without much attention to her personal predilections. She was dressed in white because Victor liked it better than any other colour, and wore only eucharistic lilies in a wreath on her left side. With her pure and perfect beauty little adornment was necessary, and in her simple dress she looked a wondrously charming specimen of womanhood.

The rooms at Deepden Chase were large and old-fashioned, with high dados of white carvings, and walls panelled with exquisite paintings of mythological subjects. The band was placed in a gallery at the end of the first drawing-room, exactly opposite to the conservatory, which led out to the second.

Chinese lamps were hung amongst the shining leaves of the camellias, and low velvet seats were placed in convenient nooks amongst the flowers. Long creepers hung down from the glass roof, and helped to shrine retiring flirtations from the unpleasant curiosity of the public gaze; but Jack had made the lighting of it his special business, and had left no pleasant twilights for imprudent vows.

The hangings of the two drawing-rooms were of violet velvet edged with gold fringe, which were handsome in themselves, but had a decidedly funeral aspect, especially at night. Still they had been there, or others like them, from time immemorial, and Mrs. Arkwright was of the old school, and looked upon change as a decoration.

Dulcie had been too much occupied with more



important concerns to care about her surroundings, but now that her lover was here, close by her side, though silent and undemonstrative, she looked round the rooms with a critical eye in the pauses of the first waltz, and thought they were decidedly behind the times.

"Your cousin looks very pretty to-night," she remarked to Vere, who happened to be her partner. "I needn't ask who gave her those roses."

"Somerville!" shortly, as if the word stung his lips.

"Not really? I thought he was engaged to his own cousin."

"I don't know who he is engaged to; but I believe he makes love to them both at once. One has his roses—the other his camellias."

"And is neither jealous?"

"I can answer for Nella; don't know about the other."

"You won't let her marry him!" looking up at him in surprise.

He shrugged his shoulders, afraid of saying the words which rose to his lips—"I trust to to-night."

"For my part," in a whisper, "I would rather marry Calcraft. He tried to hang some one, though it wasn't his trade."

"You will give Mallon a dance presently? He looks as if he could eat me for being in his place."

"I thought it was better to wait. You see, he is here as a stranger."

"There can be no danger. He looks as unlike himself as possible."

"I think he does," with a fond smile; "but with that wretched Mr. Somerville in the room I am obliged to be doubly prudent. Poor, dear little mother!" glancing towards the old lady, who was sitting in a corner in her favourite arm-chair looking like a piece of waxwork, with her snow-white hair and rosy cheeks, her black dress ornamented with a broad collar of old point.

"Do you think it is wrong to deceive her?"

"You couldn't help it. It wasn't in human nature to let him be left behind."

"You are too kind to say anything else. What makes your cousin look so unhappy? I hope you are very good to her."

"Unhappy! Why, she's in fits of laughter; listening to all sorts of nonsense from Jack."

"She smiles with her lips, but her eyes are sad; you men are so easily deceived. Have you asked her to dance?" charitably anxious that every one should be as happy as she was herself.

"Not yet; I thought I would leave the field open."

"And leave her at the mercy of every stranger who asks to be introduced to her? Let me tell you that she is the belle of the evening, and your chance is lost."

"She won't mind it."

Slowly they went round the room to "Under the Stars," which the band played to perfection; and everyone who looked at the sunny, smiling face said Dulcie Arkwright had regained her lost beauty.

"Doubted good luck for Vere," murmured Lord Fitzhugh to his neighbour, young James Witherington, the new Squire of Bevington. "Hasn't a brass farthing to bless himself with, and Dulcie is one of the best matches in the county."

"Seems to run in the family. Somerville's mad after the Maynard girl, and he is sure to come into a potful of money when the old gentleman dies."

"When? I'd bet on the old horse. His staying power is worth half-a-dozen of the young 'uns. Bad lot—going to the deuce as fast as he can—pity he should take such a pretty girl with him. You think it's a case?"

"Look at his eyes when he is speaking to her—wonder they don't scorch her."

"Women like that sort of thing. A volcano inside, ice without, that's the style to go down. I daresay if you listened to him, he is only asking her to have a cup of tea. Queer thing that about his sister," after a pause. "I always fancied there was foul play on his side, and not Maltravers. Heard anything of him?"

"Yes; ran up to the club yesterday, and

heard a rumour that there was something up. Rather a joke if he was cleared just in time to cut out Vere."

"Pshaw! not the least chance of that. How would it be if I cut in myself? A game's never lost till one side has won."

With a knowing glance at his friend, Lord Fitzhugh hurried to the corner where Dulcie was standing, with a knot of men round her.

"This is our dance, Miss Arkwright," he said, mendaciously.

"I beg your pardon," looking demurely down at her programme, "but have you changed your name to Brown?"

"Yes, during the last half-hour. Don't let us waste any time, the dance has begun."

"If you will be good enough to step on one side," said Colonel Brown with a broad smile, "we will begin at once."

And, slipping his arm round Dulcie's small waist, they glided off past the disconsolate Viscount, slowly, and in perfect time to the soft, melancholy waltz.

Meta, as the heiress of the Somerville acres, was sure to have plenty of partners, and she enjoyed herself after her usually quiet fashion, pleased with this man's step, and that other man's pleasant chatter, and happy beyond expression when Godfrey did his duty by her and asked her for the first dance.

She could not see the signs of the coming storm, though Somerville's face was deadly white and Nella's pale and thoughtful; though Dulcie, every now and then, in the midst of jest and laughter, gave a quivering sigh of fear, and Mr. Mallon seemed turned into a stone statue, as he leant in silence that he rarely broke, against the doorway.

To some amongst them the whole scene was like the feasting and revelry before the deluge. Above the notes of waltzes rose the groan of a shipwrecked hope, and mixed with the sound of the loudest laughter, was the sob of a girl's despair.

Dulcie shivered with a passing thrill of fear as, for the first time that evening, her lover wound his arm round her and drew her gently to his heart. To lose him now, after this one wild ray of hope, would be more hard to bear than all the desolation of the past.

"Are you cold, dear?" he asked, in surprise.

"No, only frightened," smiling with pale lips.

"Go on—to think is dangerous."

When the waltz was over, their steps went involuntarily to the conservatory. There, side by side, amongst the flowers, they sat for one happy quarter-of-an-hour, with so much to say to each other, yet few words on their lips; their eyes exchanging wistful glances, their hearts too full for speech, divinely content, because for a few minutes they were at last together.

Only a few yards off stood Vere, his fair head making havoc amongst the white blossoms of a camellia, as he stood by his cousin's side, and gave her, in his usual bungling fashion, a piece of his mind.

"Of course it's no good my saying anything," he remarked, crossly, "but I can tell you, that before this time to-morrow you will be sorry."

She shook her head.

"I shan't be sorry, because I am doing it with my eyes open."

"You think there's no harm in marrying a second-hand, if you know all about it first?" his eyes flashing resentfully.

"Who talks about marrying? Surely I may talk civilly to a man for a few minutes; I may accept the flowers which he has taken the trouble to order from town; and I may dance once or twice with him in the course of an evening without being burdened with him for the rest of my life!"

How pretty she looked with the light playing on her reproachful eyes, and the fairness of her neck, and yet he hardened his heart against her.

"You might do all these things," he said, sternly, "and I should be the last man to say a word against you; but you have encouraged him shamelessly till you are almost bound to marry him, in order to save your character."

"Cyrl, you go too far," and she threw back her head in passionate anger.

"You have gone further than any modest, pur-minded—"

"Hush! you shan't say it!" her bosom heaving under her lace. "I have done nothing that I would be afraid to confess to your mother. You don't understand; some day you will," with a strangled sob, "and then you will be sorry."

"If I could by any possibility be mistaken—if I could believe that eyes and ears had both misled me, I shouldn't be sorry, but gladder than I ever was before. But this is nonsense," his voice hardening like his heart. "You have chosen to compromise yourself with the only villain of your acquaintance and you must take the consequences."

"I am quite prepared. What a comfort that you will be too far away in India to see them."

"I am not there yet," coldly.

"No, I only wish you were, and then," her lips trembling, "I should never have known how disagreeable you could be."

"Disagreeable! Simply because I do my duty!"

"Duty is always a pretence for the unkindest, meanest cuts of all."

"I wonder that you know anything about it. Do it to-night; send Somerville about his business, and be something like the girl you used to be at Elstone," his tone softening, the harsh look melting from his eyes.

"I am doing it," she said, proudly, "but not in the cold, pharisaical way you wish. Whatever my faults, it has never been my way to kick a man when he was down."

Godfrey came up at the moment, and held out his arm, bending down to whisper something in her ear.

She placed her hand on his coat-sleeve with her most winning smile, in reckless defiance of Vere's presence, and without another look at her cousin suffered him to lead her back into the drawing-room.

"Never my way to kick a man when he was down!" the words lingered strangely in Cyrl's ears. "Had she heard anything? Could she have guessed I and had pity more to do with it, after all, than love?"

These were problems which puzzled his brain, whilst the faintest ray of light, no bigger than a glow-worm's star, twinkled through the darkness.

## CHAPTER XLIX.

Two o'clock! the fatal hour was approaching. Victor was grave, with overpowering emotion, and Dulcie went about through the brilliantly-lighted ball-room, with lips as white as her dress.

"Is Somerville mad or drunk?" and Vere leant wearily, more tired in mind than body against the wall by his friend's side.

"Don't know, I'm sure. Off his head somehow," his eyes following his enemy with a vindictive glance as he disappeared into the conservatory, bending in earnest conversation over the troubled face beside him.

"He has crushed his little cousin, till she looks like a limp rag."

"And yours!" rousing himself to take an interest in Vere's affairs, as well as his own.

"Not crushed, but infatuated," with a heavy sigh. "What shall we do if we can't get rid of him?"

"Take him with us, and face it out as best we can. In less than half-an-hour we ought to start!"

"Yes, I must soon be looking after Lady Somerville. It would be as well to send off the landau first."

"Want a partner?" and Jack Arkwright caught hold of him by the coat-sleeve. "Come along, I've got the jolliest little girl in the room all ready for you, and she's a stunning dancer!"

"Dance with her yourself. I've done my duty thoroughly," trying to shake him off.

"Duty be hanged! She's too good for you by half. Here she is. Captain Vere, Miss Stevenson. He's an old chum of mine, so pray be good



SLOWLY AND BORROWFULLY GODFREY SOMERVILLE RODE HOME ALONE.

to him," and with a regular look he darted off to find another victim, leaving Cyril in the hands of a buxom country dame, who looked as if she could manage him.

Meta was sitting by the side of a most uninteresting partner when Godfrey came up to her, and told her that Lady Somerville was ready to go. She rose obediently, delighted to have his escort, and without waiting to say good-bye to anyone, for he seemed in a great hurry, ran upstairs to put on her cloak. He was waiting for her at the bottom of the stairs when she came down, and gave her his arm to the hall door.

"Where's Nella?" she asked, as she caught sight of her mother inside the carriage and her father standing by the door.

"Coming," he said, briefly.

"Get in, my dear—get in," exclaimed Sir Edward, who was always in a hurry when starting. "Where's the other one?"

"With Vere, I fancy," said Godfrey, carelessly. "How fidgety old Spider gets! He can't stand for a moment!"

"No more he ought on such a night as this! Just go and see if you can find her."

Somerville departed, but presently returned, saying that there was not a trace of Miss Maynard to be seen.

The old Baronet got in a fuss, and said they must go without her.

"Oh, my dear!" remonstrated his wife, "I don't like to leave her alone with only the gentlemen!"

"You won't leave her, for we are coming at once," said Godfrey, bundling his uncle into the carriage, and shutting the door after him. "Surely Vere can take care of her if I can't!"

"Girl's own fault," muttered Sir Edward, as he drew up the glass.

Then the footman took his place on the box, and Somerville drew a deep breath of relief as the horses started forward, and the landau rolled quickly down the drive.

"Now for it," he said to himself, as he tossed off a glass of champagne in the supper-room in

order to brace his nerves. "Everything depends on my luck during the next ten minutes."

Then he went off to eat his last die for love and life!

Only a quarter of an hour before he had been sitting by Nella's side in the most secluded corner of the conservatory. The light of the lamp overhead worried him. He jumped up and blew it out.

"What did you do that for?" she exclaimed, nervously. "I am neither afraid of seeing or of being seen."

"There is enough light to see you by, and prying eyes I detest!" Then there was a long silence.

Only a far-off murmur of music came to that distant corner, and the rest of the conservatory was nearly empty.

Nella's heart was full of anxiety for others and bitter pain for herself. By her misguided generosity she had forfeited her own happiness and Meta's. That simple-hearted, unsuspecting innocent girl was trembling in the balance.

Godfrey's eyes were wandering over her, taking in every charm as they went, and his wild heart was throbbing with a thousand hopes and fears. At last he spoke, and his voice was hoarse, as a man's voice is apt to be when his heart is stirred to its depths.

"You might love me a little to-night, Nella, if only because it's the last time."

"As if I could put it on and off like a pair of gloves"—her eyes met his and sank.

"You might put it on"—bending closer—"just to give a fellow one gleam of light before the darkness."

"Lightning only makes the night-scene darker."

"But stars don't, Nella!" she felt his hot breath on her cheek and shrank away. "I would have given up everything for you!"

"I wish I could think you were sorry for the evil you had done," she said, gravely, looking away from him, at the spiral frond of a fern.

"I am sorry for nothing, except that it doesn't

last to the end. I don't think I could rest in my grave if Maitravers gets off scot free!"

"You are not in your grave yet. There may be long years before you, which Heaven has given you for repentance! Oh, Godfrey, don't you believe in Heaven!"

"Yes, sometimes," with a slight smile. "Now, for instance, when you are close to me!"

She got up from the seat.

"If you talk so profanely I won't stay with you!"

"Sit down and I'll do anything you like. Don't you know it is an angel's mission to reclaim a sinner?"

"But I'm not an angel."

"Aren't you? I fancy them very like you. He got up slowly and stood by her side; then pulled out his watch and looked at it. "Past two o'clock on Wednesday morning; by half-past three I shall be dead to all who have either cursed or blessed me—dead to little Meta, who has always been good to me—dead to my uncle and aunt, who, in spite of all their stupid prejudice, treated me like a son! If I were really on my death-bed you would refuse me nothing! Can't you fancy it now, and let me touch your lips with mine?"

"No!" shrinking back amongst the camellia leaves. "Give it to Meta!"

"Meta! whom I've kissed a hundred times in my life!"

"But she loves you so!"

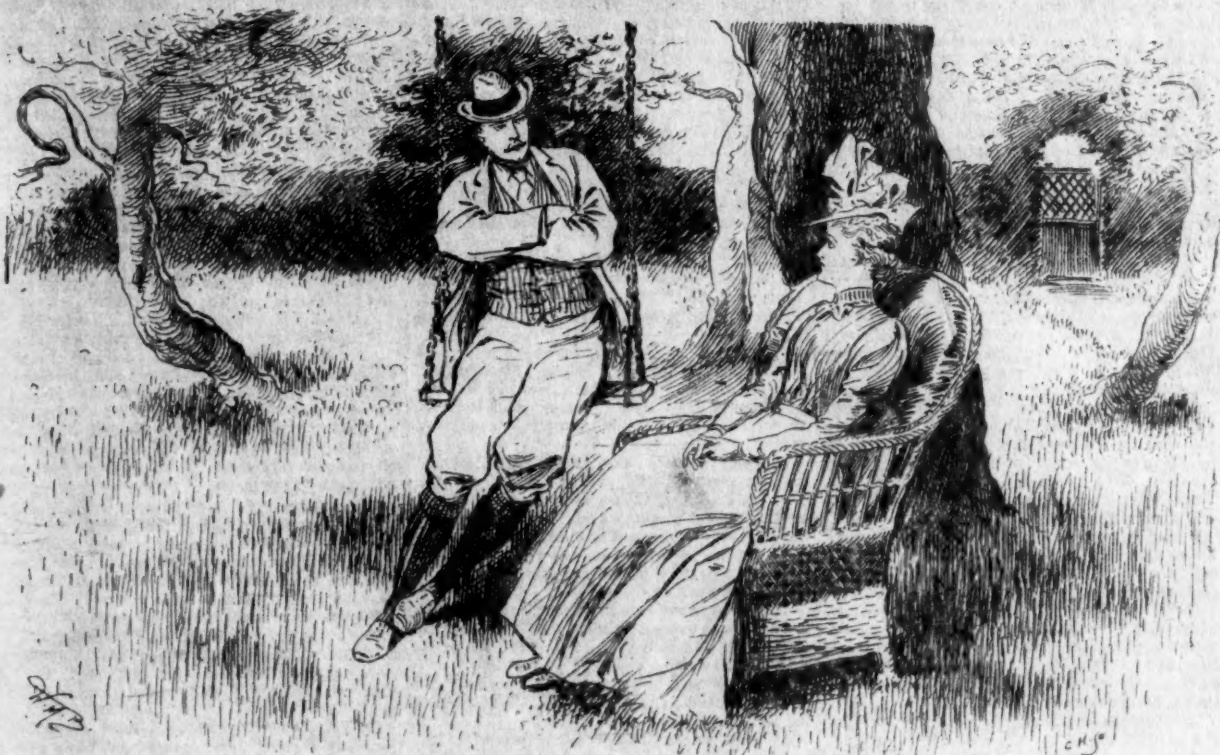
That was an accepted fact to be passed by without remark, and treated as such love most often is, with unheeding indifference.

"Just one," he pleaded, his dark eyes glowing as if with inward fire; and then he bent his head and took it, his heart bounding with joy, whilst hers became like a stone.

"Good-bye!" she said, faintly; and then added, "Take me back to Lady Somerville," as she stooped low over her roses.

(To be continued.)





"I REALLY DO THINK I DESERVE A LITTLE KITT FOR MY STUPID MISTAKE!" COLIN SAID.

## BROWN EYES AND BLUE.

### CHAPTER IV.

"MISS CELIA, here's Miss Barlow come to see you," says Prudence, poking her frilled cap into the little room adjoining father's library, which is especially my own *sanctum sanctorum*, and where, this summer afternoon, I lie curled up on the deep oak window-seat, busily engaged in rubbing some coins bright for father to decipher some old inscription on them.

"Oh! I am glad, Prue! I'll come directly," I exclaim with alacrity, putting the coins back in their box until another leisure moment, and getting off the window-seat.

Miss Hannah Barlow is the dearest and sweetest old lady anyone could desire to meet in a long day's march. There is nothing whatever of "crabbed age" about her many years. Her hair, silver-white, powdered by Time himself, she wears in little short curls under her lace cap, and a muslin kerchief always encircles her neck, making her look like some pretty old picture of ages ago. When you hear her pleasant, chiming voice—never soured, never bitter, always kindly—you feel that she means everything she says. No honeyed phrases uttered for the nonce.

Her brother, the Reverend Stephen Barlow, is rector of East Marling, whose house she keeps, for he is a bachelor. He is many years Miss Hannah's junior, and she treats him even now like a big boy more than a man of years—settling everything for him as she would have done had he still been in the nursery.

Rumour—whose tongue is always busy—has it, with what truth I cannot say, being then too young to judge myself, that when Aunt Rachel first came to Gable End she tried her fascinations on Stephen Barlow. Whether aunt found him obdurate, or whether Miss Hannah stepped in and turned the shafts of winged love aside, I know not. This I do know, that there is no love lost between aunt and Miss Hannah. It is

a thrust and parry between them when they meet, for Miss Hannah's clear sense can pierce through aunt's machinations. Outwardly, they are courteous to a degree. Miss Hannah could not hurt a fly; aunt would not from policy—therein lies all the difference.

Stephen Barlow is one of those kind-hearted, gentle-souled clerics, who would fall easily enough into any matrimonial snare set for them, and, once in, make no effort to get out again. He is, however, I honestly believe, completely contented to be managed by his sister, and desires no other housekeeper, and nothing in the shape of a wife, for the remaining term of his natural life.

I think aunt quite recognises the hopelessness of her ever becoming rectress of East Marling, and guardian angel of the village. I believe she attributes primary failure to Miss Hannah, and bears her a grudge inwardly. A cat always sheathes its claws.

For more than a week past I have seen nothing of the Barlows, for they have been away, staying in Gloucestershire with some old friends, so Miss Hannah told me when she came to bid me good-bye before they left Marling.

I suppose that Mr. Barlow, having taken his clergyman's week, has returned home for to-morrow's duty, which accounts for the appearance of Miss Hannah, whom I am always unforgottenly glad to see. I can talk to her as if she were of my own age, feeling nothing incongruous in my confessions; confiding my small woes—of which, truth to tell, I have never had many—into her dear old sympathetic ear, and feel the happier for my unburdening. So I cry, very joyfully, as I enter the Gable End drawing-room—

"I am pleased to see you, dear Miss Hannah! How good of you to walk over all this way on a hot afternoon. You must be quite baked. But I am glad you have come."

"Thank you, dear Celia!" she returns, rising to greet me, and kissing me on each cheek, French fashion. "And now"—seating herself

on an old-fashioned chintz-covered ottoman, and pulling me beside her—"sit down here, and tell me all about this morning. I want to hear the whole story from the beginning."

"Tell you about this morning!" I echo, thinking it impossible she can refer to my comedy, for how could she know anything about it?

"Yes!" she goes on, patting my hand lying in hers; "a little bird told me all about it, or, rather, I ought to say a big bird gave me such a garbled account of something or other that happened this morning by the river that I have come to you to hear the meaning of it all."

"Oh!" I rejoice, a dawning smile on my lips; "I suppose you mean the fisherman and the watercress gatherer. How did you know?"

"Because Mr. Boughton told me, dear. I must tell you, Stephen and I came home from Gloucestershire the night before last, and brought Colin Boughton with us. His father was an old college friend of Stephen's that he had not met for many years, and staying with his son in the same house. My brother and I took such a fancy to him that we asked him to come back with us for a week or two for some fishing, of which he is very fond. I had intended bringing him over to call yesterday afternoon, but was prevented at the last moment. Just at lunch time he came in to me in the greatest agitation of mind, giving me, as I tell you, a garbled account, of which I could neither make head or tail. At last he mentioned the name of Celia, and it struck me at once that he might mean yourself."

"Yes!" I put in laughing; "it was myself, and no one else."

"Questioning him further, and making him describe this damsel he spoke of—and I must tell you he gave quite a flattering description of you, mademoiselle—I knew at once it must be my Celia Lascelles; and I told him what old friends we were, and that it would be all right. But that seemed to frighten him quite; he said that really he was immensely sorry to leave us, but

he must go. Nothing I could say would make him alter his determination, he'd made such a fool of himself; and the bare idea of meeting or seeing you again seemed to fill him with dismay."

"Poor me. What a Gorgon I must be, Miss Hannah, mustn't I! Perhaps he'll alter his mind about going by the time you get back."

"My dear child, I left him in the act of packing up his things preparatory to a sitting either this evening or the first thing to-morrow morning. I am sure he really means to go."

"I am terribly sorry"—wrinkling up my brows in a favourite fashion of my own—"that is, I am sorry if it is my fault: what can I do!"

"Well, dear, I want you to come back with me to the Rectory, and try your persuasive powers to make matters straight. I am sure he'll stay if you ask him"—smiling slyly at me—"besides, I think as you are the objective cause of his departure, you are the best person to beg him to remain. What say you?" turning her dear old face to mine.

"By all means, Miss Hannah," I acquiesce, blithely; "of course, I'll come if you wish me to. Am I not always ready and willing to do anything in the world for you? You don't ever ask me to do half enough."

At this juncture in floats Aunt Rachel—softly, pattering, gracefully.

"How do you do, Miss Barlow! I am charmed to see you. Celia, sweetest! why did you not call me directly Miss Barlow came!" with a glance at me.

"I had no idea you were here," she goes on, addressing Miss Hannah, "otherwise I should have come at once. Prudence happened to mention that you were in the drawing-room, when I was in the store-room just now, otherwise I should not have known it at all."

Aunt speaks as if seeing Miss Hannah was the one end and aim of her whole existence.

"Perhaps I am the most to blame, Mrs. Lucelios," returns her chiming voice, "for I confess to having asked for Celia. I thought you might be busy and not care to be bothered with visitors."

"Do not say that, Miss Barlow," purrs aunt, smoothly, "you know how welcome you always are at Gable End."

"As much as you are at the Rectory," says Miss Hannah, smiling, knowing that aunt detests the sight of her; "but I really came to carry off Celia for the afternoon and evening."

"She will be too delighted, I am sure. Will you not, Celia, precious!" unctuously.

"I want to introduce her to a young friend of mine who is staying with us. We brought him back from Gloucestershire with us the night before last," looking at me.

"Oh! a gentleman!" inquires aunt, a trifle less sweetly.

"Yes, the son of an old college friend of Mr. Barlow's, a Mr. Collis Boughton."

"Indeed!" as if waiting for further information.

"He is such a nice young fellow. So genial and pleasant. I am certain he and Celia will get on capitally together."

"No doubt," a trifle coldly from aunt.

She has an unwarrantable dislike to anything in the shape of a young man. I suppose she thinks they might or might not be a spoke in Michael's wheel. Anyway, when any of that kind appear at Gable End, they are made to feel *detrop* in a smoothly polite way.

"The Boughtons are a very good old family, but no money, unfortunately for them. However, birth and breeding count for something even in this money-loving age. Nineteenth century money won't make a real true-hearted gentleman, and Collis is certainly that," ends Miss Hannah, warmly.

"Possibly," returns aunt, chilly, "not having the pleasure of Mr. Boughton's acquaintance, I am not in a position to judge of his merits or demerits. No doubt he is all and everything you say. By the bye, Celia, precious, I quite forgot when Miss Barlow asked you to spend the afternoon with her, that I expect Lady Vacher to call. I should be sorry for her to find you out when she came, and she might consider it rude, and that you were out on purpose," very pur-

ringly, as if suddenly recollecting something she had hitherto forgotten. "I dare say Miss Barlow will allow you to come some other day instead, and have tea with her."

By this speech I recognised at once that aunt is averse to my going to the Rectory, but will not openly say so. She loveth the crooked way better far than the straight one.

"You needn't be at all alarmed on that score," puts in Miss Hannah, quickly. "I know Lady Vacher will not call at Gable End this afternoon, because an hour back I left her in bed with one of her bad neuralgic attacks, where she intends remaining."

"Dear me, I am sorry to hear that. I know she suffers very much with neuralgia," returns aunt, sweetly. "Then, of course, Celia, darling, I have nothing to say against your going if you wish to."

"You need not trouble to send for her. I will see she comes home safely. Stephen shall bring her back, if that is all. She will be quite safe," emphasises Miss Hannah, which is a tiny thrust back at aunt for trying to prevent my going."

"Thank you very much, indeed, Miss Barlow," answers aunt, stately, feeling her defeat. "I have no doubt of Celia's safety, otherwise, of course, I could not think of letting her come; but I always feel myself morally responsible to my dear brother-in-law for his child's welfare, and you, therefore, must allow me send my son Michael for her."

I know by aunt's extra purr that she would dearly like to unsheath those velvet paws of hers and give Miss Hannah a good scratch; however, she says in her most amiable tone—

"You had better go at once and put on your things, sweetest; and not keep Miss Barlow waiting for you."

As I go out of the door I hear her softly inquiring after Mr. Barlow's health, and Miss Hannah's dulcet tones informing her that her brother was never better in his life, much better than if he had a wife to worry him.

In another quarter of an hour Miss Hannah and I are trotting down the Marling-road arm-in-arm. It is almost a two-mile walk to the Rectory, but a very pleasant one. By the scented meadows and hedgerows, through Marling Wood, where the hazel trees are blossoming, and wild honeysuckle makes the air rich and sweet with perfume, until we at last come in sight of the long, low-built, rambling, two-storied house, in which Stephen Barlow lives gratis and rent-free by permission of a large-hearted, liberal Government.

The green-painted, five-barred swing gate stands open for us, and as we pass down the smooth gravel walk towards the house I begin to experience a faint, quavery feeling at heart.

Supposing, oh! supposing, after all, brown eyes should be disagreeable, and flaily decline to have anything to say to erring me. Imagine if he says, "No, I've been made a fool of once, I'll take precious good care you don't get the opportunity again!" Was I really to blame! Perhaps so. At any rate, however he may receive me, whatever he may say or do, I must make the best of it.

"Miss Hannah, does Mr. Boughton know that you are going to bring me back?" I hazard, as we get nearer and nearer the house.

"He doesn't even know I went to fetch you, dear," she answers, glibly. "Even doubt if he knew I was out at all. I thought, under the circumstances, it would be better to give him a surprise."

"I suppose you thought if you told him your errand beforehand he might run away at once to avoid me," I say, laughing ruefully, "for no one cares to be a bugbear. 'Poor, harmless Celia! I never imagined any man would think it worth while to run away from such a country mouse as I am. Hadn't you better prepare him for my appearance, dear Miss Hannah!" feeling a half-hearted desire to shirk the meeting at the last moment. "I can wait in the drawing-room until you call me."

"No, it's part of my little plan that you should take him by surprise. You see"—jokingly—"he can't run away then. Besides, I do not think after the first five minutes he will want to"—

nodding her silver-white head sagaciously—"now, we must find out where he is first. I expect somewhere in the garden—he's generally to be found thereabouts—or the garden-orchard, where the swing is. We'll take a peep there to begin with," pushing open a lattice door leading into a walled-off portion of the Rectory garden, christened the garden-orchard by reason of its apple, pear, and plum trees in all their wealth of fruit.

She passes through first, I meekly following her, my heart in my boots. All my vaunted valour evaporated, like water in the sun.

Sitting in the swing, which is hung by big chains from a splendid old walnut tree, his feet resting on the ground, smoking the inevitable cigarette, is the fisherman, looking as if he was in a day-dream, probably about his fish.

"At, Collis, so here you are!" cries Miss Hannah, trotting up to him, and talking quickly. "I have brought a very dear little friend of mine to be introduced to you—Miss Celia Lucelios. Now, I want you to be very good friends, and amuse each other for a few minutes while I go in, take off my walking things, and tell Sarah to bring the tea out here. I think it will be pleasanter out here than indoors," and away she trots again to the house.

He had started to his feet the instant he heard Miss Hannah's voice saying, "At, Collis, so here you are!" then catching sight of me just behind her, a dark red flush burnt his face as Miss Hannah, going on to introduce me, he threw away his cigarette and bowed.

We now stand stock still, staring at each other, not a single syllable between us. I am not garbed in an old cotton dress and sun-bonnet this afternoon, but he knows me again perfectly. Is he waiting for me to speak first, or am I waiting for him?

Then suddenly my heart rises from my boots. Somehow those brown eyes cannot be so very terrible. I move forward two steps, hold out my hand, look up with an apologetic smile into his face and say,—

"Forgive me, I am very sorry."

Then—and mind you only then—his very dignified air and manner relaxes. Once more he becomes the genial, kindly-spoken brown eyes of the riverside. He smiles too, takes my proffered hand, and gives it a warm shake.

"So am I," he returns, heartily, "very sorry indeed that I was such an idiot as to mistake you for a village Phyllis. I can't think how I could have been so egregiously blind and stupid," looking at me from head to foot. "What must you have thought of me!"

"It was all my fault," I return, magnanimously. "I can quite understand your mistake, say, right well, master," with a return to the Norfolk lingo just for fun, at which we both laugh heartily, while I draw a basket chair to me, and he reseats himself in the swing.

"It was horribly idiotic of me, though. Fancy my daring to hail you with 'Hi, little girl!' You see, I perceived something feminine in the distance."

"With an awful old gown and sun-bonnet on," I interrupt gleefully.

"And I was so wrapt up in the loss of that wretched bait that I didn't take the trouble to look what kind of feminine it was. Then when I did at last, as I thought, make you understand, you answered me in that fearful lingo; so I do really think I deserve a little pity for my mistake, stupid as it undoubtedly was."

"It was the lingo that did it. I could not resist the temptation."

"Don't you confess it was very cruel of you to hoax me like that? What a capital actress you would make! You were the country girl to the very life."

"So I am a country girl, Mr. Boughton. I certainly did not act a part there."

"And that bob curtsey when I gave you that miserable, humiliating apocryphal. It was infinitely. I don't believe I've seen anything better on the stage than that."

"You must not flatter my acting so much, or I shall begin to think seriously of taking to the boards for a livelihood," I say, laughing. "But concerning that same expence, I wonder you don't



have me taken up for obtaining money under false pretences."

"That would be a finishing stroke to the whole business, wouldn't it? I've half a mind to follow your good advice, and hand you over to the local hobby for confinement in the village durance vile, that is, if Marling possesses such accommodation for the wholesale criminal."

"Seriously, though, Mr. Boughton, let me restore the sixpence to its rightful owner, now I am about it. I shall not be completely happy in my mind until I know it's safely back in your pocket. Indeed, I brought it with me for the very purpose," taking it out of my pocket and tendering it to him. "Please take it."

He waves it off.

"Horrible little coin!" he exclaims, with gusto; "primary cause of my undoing. Don't let me see its hideous little face, I implore you, Miss Lascelles. The sight of that sixpence gives me a cold shiver down my spinal marrow. Give it to the first *bona fide* villager you meet going home. Besides, all things considered, it isn't my property, veritably speaking. A labourer is worthy of his hire, and you know you can't deny that you fairly earned it," and the brown eyes gaze wickedly mischievous at me.

"I never deny the truth, and as it is most certainly the first and only money I have ever earned in my useless life, I'll keep it as a constant reminder that I can work when I choose."

"If you really and truly wish to earn your own living, Miss Lascelles, I am prepared to engage you upon the same terms until further notice," he urges, somewhat eagerly.

"To be honest, it was Peter, our gardener's boy, who earned the sixpence, for he dug the bait. I nearly threw the tin away several times on my way back to you; the worms wriggled so fearfully, and looked so horrid. I had more than half a mind, too, not to return at all," I add, as an afterthought.

"I'm intensely glad you did," he exclaims, heartily, evidently quite forgetful of his late discomfiture. "Imagine me, an eager fisherman, expectant of those same worms, waiting for the bait that never came; imagine those little perch, of which I afterwards caught three, waiting in vain for their succulent tit-bit. No; I am very glad, indeed, you did come back."

In my heart of hearts, I think, I am very glad, too, but I do not utter my thoughts aloud. So we chat on; and thus, when Miss Hannah presently appears, with her garden hat on, followed by Sarah with the tea, she finds us the very best of friends.

She makes no comment of any kind, however, on our reconciliation, I might almost call it, nor asks us how we have amused ourselves during her absence; only smooths my locks with her hand, for I have divested my head of its Sunday hat, which I donned in lieu of the fatal sun-bonnet, and says, pleasantly,—

"Did you think I and Sarah were never coming with the tea? Old Mrs. Hubbard, the clerk's wife at Roundham, came in to get some flannel for her rheumatism, and kept me talking with her some time. After tea you must go, Colin to give you a swing. Celia adores swinging, turning to him.

"Do you?" looking at me.

"Yes; am I not a big baby? It is perfectly delicious to feel oneself going through the air touching the leaves."

"I shall be delighted to swing you as much and as often as you like, Miss Lascelles. I've a good deal of muscle which requires developing, and I should imagine swinging was as good as dumb-bells, and better fun. I'll swing you all the day long if you wish."

I mentally comment that this offer does not chime in exactly with his determination to leave the Rectory to-morrow. In fact, I believe he's forgotten all about that; however, I hold my peace, and answer, soberly,—

"Thanks very much, Mr. Boughton; but I won't make a martyr of you to that extent. It would be cruelty to animals; the society would have me up."

"I am quite content to be an animal," he returns, with a glance from those very brown

eyes, "a beast of burden, and I don't think you will work me too hard."

"No, you may trust me so far," I answer, looking at Sarah bringing the old Queen Anne silver teapot, which is one of Miss Hannah's especial treasures.

Mr. Barlow joins us, and we place ourselves round the impromptu tea-table.

"Let me cut the bread-and-butter, Miss Hannah," I say, gaily, taking up a knife and the home-baked brown loaf. "Father always says I cut this bread-and-butter better than anyone at Gable End."

"Do, dear," she returns, cream-jug in hand, for the yellow cream is so thick it has to be ladled out with a little spoon.

"By all means let us have a specimen of your prowess in the art of thin bread-and-butter cutting; and I'll help the honeycomb, not to be idle. You remind me of that little poem about Werter's Charlotte. Do you remember it?"

"Yes, you mean"—stopping short, knife in one hand, and quoting,—

'Werter had a love for Charlotte, such as words could never utter,  
Would you know how first he met her?—She was eating bread-and-butter.'

Which does not exactly apply in this case, does it?"

"Why not?" he remarks innocently, giving Mr. Barlow a wedge of golden honeycomb.

"Because we happen to have met before," I argue, mildly, going on with my cutting.

"Ah, yes! well, perhaps so. Let me see, though, the finale of the poem was most harrowing, wasn't it? How does it run?"

'So he sighed, and pined, and cried, and his passion boiled and bubbled,  
Till he blew his silly brains out, and was no more by it troubled.'

Am I right, Miss Lascelles?" taking his cup from Miss Hannah.

"Quite right. But you've not quoted all of it," I respond, laughingly.

'Charlotte, when she saw his body, borne before her on a shunter,  
Like a well-conducted person, went on cutting bread-and-butter.'

And I flourish my knife.

"I wonder if you would be like cruel Charlotte!" he questions, helping himself to two slices doubled over. "Supposing you were to see my hapless cooer carried out of that gate, would you go on calmly spreading the butter, and carving wafers of slices of brown bread?" melodramatically.

"I can't say what I should do. But the circumstances are all so different that there is no parallel to be drawn that I can see. Do you, Miss Hannah?" appealing to her.

"Not at present, dear, certainly," she rejoins, pouring out Mr. Barlow his second cup of tea; "but I should not think there would be any necessity for Colin to blow his brains out like poor Lovelock, lovelorn Werter. I think Charlotte must have been a very hard-hearted girl to behave as she did. I don't believe my little Celia could follow such a cruel example."

"Well spoken, Miss Hannah!" chimes in Mr. Boughton, approvingly. "Miss Lascelles, another slice of that wondrous brown bread-and-butter, please. I never thought I was so fond of bread-and-butter before."

"The staff of life," mildly puts in Mr. Barlow, beginning his third cup of tea. "Hannah, my dear, talking of bread, remember that David Hoare has three loaves instead of two next Saturday, will you? And Jane Moxon is to come every morning for half-a-pint of milk for her grandmother's gruel."

Miss Hannah registers it in her memory, and with this our discussion anent Werter and Charlotte comes to a finale, together with the tea.

How pleasant it all is. How delicious and sweet the honeycomb!—how nice the home-baked bread and freshly-churned butter!—how refreshing the tea, eaten and drunk *à fresco* under the shade of the old walnut tree! Never, surely, was time so happy.

Then we all stroll round the garden, smell the

lavender, look at the ripening fruit, wander from the orchard to the pond, where broods of yellow, fluffy ducklings disport themselves on the placid surface; back again to the garden orchard where I have my swing, and go over so much higher than ever Michael sends me, to my intense delight.

Lastly comes gentle gloaming, and supper in the Rectory dining-room, after which Mr. Boughton and I play spellikins, while Miss Hannah watches our game, knitting swiftly socks for brother Stephen. We all scream merrily over the shakes and mistakes in our arithmetic on counting up, and generally enjoy ourselves. At least I know I do thoroughly, which is perhaps one advantage of being of a babyish turn of mind.

Finally Michael appears, like the warning ghost in *Hamlet*, to take me home by the light of the moon. Mr. Boughton thinks he'll come too, and Miss Hannah says it's such a lovely night they will all come part of the way with us, which I am only too glad of, as I do not feel inclined for a long *tête à-tête* with Michael.

We troop down the Marling-road, which now lies in deep shadow, and again in the flooding silver moonbeams. Michael stalks on one side of me, Miss Hannah next him, Mr. Barlow beyond, and Colin Boughton on the other side of me. Michael has the air of a gendarme marshalling his prisoner along to the Bastille.

Since his introduction to Mr. Boughton at the Rectory he has barely acknowledged his presence, save for an occasional yes and no to questions addressed to him, necessitating an answer of some kind.

Once or twice I have noticed the brown eyes attentively regarding my cousin with the faintest smile of amusement at his want of friendliness. A smile, however, which, as Michael keeps his face straight before him, when not turned in Miss Hannah's direction, he is not conscious of.

When we emerge from Marling Wood and reach the first Gable End meadow, the Barlows and Mr. Boughton wish us good-night.

Miss Hannah and Mr. Barlow are arranging some choir question with Michael, who marshals them on Sundays, as Colin Boughton and I shake hands last of all.

"Good-night, Miss Celia," he says, low-voiced, holding my hand for a second longer than is absolutely necessary in his. "Is that Lubin?" he asks, in an undertone, looking down straight into my face.

"Lubin!" I echoed after him, then I add quickly, "why do you want to know?"

"Natural curiosity, I suppose. I am right, then?" releasing my hand.

"I'm sure I don't know," I return, wrinkling my brows, which is hardly the truth, because I do know very well, only I don't see why I should say so. "Why should it be Lubin?" I demand again, not exactly satisfied in my own mind that his first question was one that I quite appreciate.

"In Arcadia every Phyllis has her Damon, every Chloe her Stephen, every village Phoebe her Lubin. Good-night, Miss Lascelles," in a louder tone, and Michael looms black on us in the moonbeams, throwing his shadow right between us two.

Long after we have separated, they going their way, Michael and I ours, I hear dear Miss Hannah's ringing voice through the summer night, and Colin Boughton's deeper man's tones in response.

Mr. Barlow I do not hear, but that is not remarkable. He seldom is heard except in the pulpit, and there he is impressive enough. I give a little sigh to myself, for somehow they seem to take away all the sweetness and brightness of the summer night with them.

"I have had such a pleasant time, Michael," I say aloud, the next moment.

"Indeed, Celia. I am very glad to hear it," he answers, not manifesting any particular gladness of voice though.

"Mr. Boughton is such a splendid singer," I go on, cheerfully, brightening up at the recollection. "I went over so high—much higher than you ever send me."

"Perhaps Mr. Boughton does not particularly

When she reached the landing at the top of the stairs she stopped to regain her breath. Cyril Vere was standing straight in front of her. He pointed to the roses.

"Who gave you these?" sternly, as if their beauty were an offence to him.

"Mr. Somerville."

"And what does he expect in return?"

"Nothing, except that I should wear them," recovering her composure at a jump.

"And you will wear them?"

"Certainly, they are much too good to be wasted."

"Yes, wear his roses—steal him from the poor simple girl who loves him," he said, slowly. "Sell yourself, body and soul, to the devil! I wish to Heaven I had never seen you!"

Then he dashed to the ground the one lovely Marshal Niel he was carrying, and trod it under foot viciously, inwardly dubbing himself a fool for the half-crown he had spent on it.

Then he went downstairs with his nose in the air, and she went slowly back to her room, knowing that she would have willingly given up every rose in her hand for one leaf of the broken blossom which was lying outside on the carpet.

She flung the flowers down on her bed, and paced the room restlessly.

Cyril had no business to speak to her like that, when he had never done anything but snub her ever since he had been in the house. She had looked forward to his visit as the acme of bliss, and what had it brought her! Nothing but pain.

From the first he had chosen to fancy that she was in love with Godfrey Somerville—a poor compliment, when he told her at the same time that he was unworthy of any woman's friendship.

From the first he had never given her a chance, but always condemned her without a trial, at the same time flirting with Miss Arkwright to such an extent that the whole county had decided they were going to make a match.

Godfrey Somerville was no gentleman, in spite of birth and education; he had treated Meta in a shameful manner, offering his hand to the heiress, and making love to another girl behind her back.

He had treated her (Nella) about as badly as he could, rude and insolent so long as he disliked her, and only pretending a violent passion for her when he knew that it would disgust her to the last degree.

He had done his best to ruin her happiness out of selfish spite; he had insulted her when she had gone out of her way to do him good; and now he chose every opportunity of making her feel a traitor to the girl whom she loved like a sister.

She had spoken the truth when she said that she hated him, but a woman's heart is always open to compassion, and in the hour of his despair she pitied him.

"I won't be dictated to," she vowed to herself, with the hot blood rushing to her cheeks. "Just for to-night I will be kind to him, and then I shall never see him again. It can't do any harm. To-morrow will be such a terrible day for him. I couldn't bear to be cruel on the last night."

Her reflections were interrupted by a knock at the door, and Meta came in, looking pale and unhappy.

"What is the matter, dear?" asked Nella, affectionately, her own troubles forgotten in a moment.

"I don't know," and Meta sank disconsolately into a chair.

"Yes, you do. Tell me at once. You never have any secrets from me," sitting down by her on the floor, and taking her hand.

"I expect it is all nonsense. You would only laugh at me."

"Not if you are really bothered. Is it about Mr. Somerville?"

"Yes," in a low voice. "I don't believe he cares for me a bit."

"He has always been fond of you."

She moved her foot impatiently.

"Yes, as a cousin—what's that?"

"And now he's sorry," the corners of her mouth drooping.

"If he is it is because he knows he is not worthy of you. He is quite right—he never was."

"I—I was never half good enough for him, and he sees it!" the tears dropping slowly down her cheeks. "Oh! Nella! if I had been more like you he would have liked me better!"

"He used to hate me!"

"But does he now?"

This was a difficult question, and Nella was obliged to lean her chin on her hand and reflect a little before answering. She wanted to be perfectly honest, and yet it was awkward.

"My dear," she said, slowly, after a pause, "he is a man for whom I never had the smallest respect. He knew it and it made him angry. He suspected that I liked my cousin much more than himself, and he was jealous, not out of love," she added, quickly, "but from the meanest sort of hatred; and so he took to picking flowers for me, and paying me all sorts of attentions on purpose to annoy Cyril. It wasn't nice of him, was it?"

"No, but are you sure that's all?" very dubiously.

"Not quite. He tries to flirt with me sometimes, but he knows that I hate him; and I am only kinder to him now because I think he is unhappy. Oh! Meta dear, I would give anything to make you love him less!"

"Why?" drawing back suspiciously.

"Because I see such sorrow in store for you."

"Perhaps you want him for yourself?"

"Not if he were the last man left in the world!" she exclaimed scornfully. "If you can think such a thing as that, I can't talk to you!"

"Oh, Nella, forgive me!" holding her hands tight. "I didn't mean it, but I am nearly out of my mind with thinking."

"Poor little thing! you would never be happy if you married him."

"Nothing shall prevent me!"

"Not even," hesitatingly, "if you thought he did not love you quite enough!"

"No; when he saw how I worshipped him he would be sure to love me more. Why did you say he was unhappy?" still feeling uncomfortable at Nella's superior knowledge.

"Can't you see it for yourself?"

"Yes; but you seemed to know about it."

"Perhaps he will tell us soon, till then we must wait; but, Meta dear," looking up earnestly into her face, "watch him carefully and see if he is the sort of man you could really trust your future to. Can you respect him? Can you feel that he would help you to be better—that you could trust him always to do what was right and honourable, even when your back was turned and you couldn't see?"

"Of course I could!" with a burst of tears.

"I shouldn't love him a bit if I didn't."

She got up from her low seat feeling that her efforts were thrown away.

"Then it is no use talking about it. Dry your eyes quick, or you will look a fright this evening."

Meta obeyed. As she came up to give her a kiss she caught sight of the flowers on the bed.

"Oh! what exquisite roses! Where did they come from?"

"Like yours, from Covent Garden," pouring some water in a basin, and putting them in without much care.

"But these are lovely!"

"I don't suppose he chose them. Yours, I presume, are his favourite colour!"

"Of course—if you mean Godfrey's. I thought these came from Captain Vere!"

"Cyril couldn't afford it, poor fellow! He bought me one, so he did think of me,"—with the deepest sigh.

"Where is it?"

"He never gave it me. It's outside—in fragments."

"Why on earth did he pull it to pieces?"

"Because this is the most detestable world that mortals ever had to live in. Go, there's a darling! I want to do my hair before dinner."

She also wanted to escape a humiliating burst of tears, which she felt was imminent; but her mood changed so soon as Meta had gone, and it

was with a cold smile that she looked down on the fragrant blossoms which brought summer into her room in the midst of cold December. If the roses had tongues, as Godfrey said, they could only tell her of a love that she must not listen to; and the only blossom that might have spoken was thrown away by the hand that ought to have given it.

Grieving over shattered hopes, she combed out her beautiful, shining hair, wondering what the coming night would bring forth, without a suspicion of the part she was to play in the proceedings, and envying Dulcie Arkwright even the years of her sufferings, because her lover had been true to her from first to last.

## CHAPTER XLVIII.

"DEAR Lady Somerville! so glad to see you," murmured Dulcie Arkwright, as she pressed her hand; and no one would have guessed, from her calm and graceful bearing, that her heart was beating with the force of fifty hammers, because of a certain red head which had just appeared in the doorway.

Meta came next, with her mother's diamonds on her white neck, and her cousin's red camellias in her hand. Nella followed, with Godfrey's roses on her breast and in her bouquet, but no one noticed them because of the exceeding beauty of the sweet, pale face, with its aureole of shining hair which crowned the whole. Sir Edward beaming, as usual, with a kindly smile on his patrician face, with Vere close behind him, looking so unusually proud and defiant, that Jack scarcely recognized him as his "dear old chum," and then two others—the man she hated more than any other man in the whole earth, and the one she loved.

The tips of the fingers to the first, and only a hurried hand-clasp to the second, whilst lashes that feared to raise themselves dropped quivering on the softness of her cheeks.

There was a buzz of voices round her, but she scarcely heard what they said—scarcely, in fact, knew what she was doing, because of that quaintly distorted figure leaning up against the wall. Victor Maltravers there, under the roof of Deepden Chase! It seemed like one of those horrid, deceitful dreams, which had cheated her night after night into a few minutes of rapture, and only made the succeeding day seem ever so much blanker in consequence.

She roused herself with an effort, saw after partners for those who had not sufficient attractions to get them without a slight amount of outside pressure; introduced eager strangers to the girls they particularly fancied, and let her own card be filled up without much attention to her personal predilections. She was dressed in white because Victor liked it better than any other colour, and wore only eucharistic lilies in a wreath on her left side. With her pure and perfect beauty little adornment was necessary, and in her simple dress she looked a wondrously charming specimen of womanhood.

The rooms at Deepden Chase were large and old-fashioned, with high dados of white carvings, and walls panelled with exquisite paintings of mythological subjects. The band was placed in a gallery at the end of the first drawing-room, exactly opposite to the conservatory, which led out to the second.

Chinese lamps were hung amongst the shining leaves of the camellias, and low velvet seats were placed in convenient nooks amongst the flowers. Long creepers hung down from the glass roof, and helped to shroud retiring flirtations from the unpleasant curiosity of the public gaze; but Jack had made the lighting of it his special business, and had left no pleasant twilight for imprudent vows.

The hangings of the two drawing rooms were of violet velvet edged with gold fringe, which were handsome in themselves, but had a decidedly funereal aspect, especially at night. Still they had been there, or others like them, from time immemorial, and Mrs. Arkwright was of the old school, and looked upon change as a desecration.

Dulcie had been too much occupied with more



important concerns to care about her surroundings, but now that her lover was here, close by her side, though silent and undemonstrative, she looked round the rooms with a critical eye in the pauses of the first waltz, and thought they were decidedly behind the times.

"Your cousin looks very pretty to-night," she remarked to Vere, who happened to be her partner. "I needn't ask who gave her those roses."

"Somerville!" shortly, as if the word stung his lips.

"Not really! I thought he was engaged to his own cousin."

"I don't know who he is engaged to; but I believe he makes love to them both at once. One has his roses—the other his camellias."

"And is neither jealous?"

"I can answer for Nella; don't know about the other."

"You won't let her marry him!" looking up at him in surprise.

He shrugged his shoulders, afraid of saying the words which rose to his lips—"I trust to to-night."

"For my part," in a whisper, "I would rather marry Calcraft. He tried to hang some one, though it wasn't his trade."

"You will give Mallon a dance presently! He looks as if he could eat me for being in his place."

"I thought it was better to wait. You see, he is here as a stranger."

"There can be no danger. He looks as unlike himself as possible."

"I think he does," with a fond smile; "but with that wretched Mr. Somerville in the room I am obliged to be doubly prudent. Poor, dear little mother!" glancing towards the old lady, who was sitting in a corner in her favourite arm-chair looking like a piece of waxwork, with her snow-white hair and rosy cheeks, her black dress ornamented with a broad collar of old point.

"Do you think it is wrong to deceive her?"

"You couldn't help it. It wasn't in human nature to let him be left behind."

"You are too kind to say anything else. What makes your cousin look so unhappy! I hope you are very good to her."

"Unhappy! Why, she's in fits of laughter; listening to all sorts of nonsense from Jack."

"She smiles with her lips, but her eyes are sad; you men are so easily deceived. Have you asked her to dance?" charitably anxious that every one should be as happy as she was herself.

"Not yet; I thought I would leave the field open."

"And leave her at the mercy of every stranger who asks to be introduced to her! Let me tell you that she is the belle of the evening, and your chance is lost."

"She won't mind it."

Slowly they went round the room to "Under the Stars," which the band played to perfection; and everyone who looked at the sunny, smiling face said Dulcie Arkwright had regained her lost beauty.

"Danced good luck for Vere," murmured Lord Fitzhugh to his neighbour, young James Witherington, the new Squire of Bevingden. "Haven't a brass farthing to bless himself with, and Dulcie is one of the best matches in the county."

"Seems to run in the family. Somerville's mad after the Maynard girl, and he is sure to come into a potful of money when the old gentleman dies."

"When! I'd bet on the old horse. His staying power is worth half-a-dozen of the young 'uns. Bad lot—going to the deuce as fast as he can—pity he should take such a pretty girl with him. You think it's a case?"

"Look at his eyes when he is speaking to her—wonder they don't scorch her."

"Women like that sort of thing. A volcano inside, ice without, that's the style to go down. I dare say if you listened to him, he is only asking her to have a cup of tea. Queer thing that about his sister," after a pause. "I always fancied there was foul play on his side, and not Maltravers. Heard anything of him?"

"Yes; ran up to the club yesterday, and

heard a rumour that there was something up. Rather a joke if he was cleared just in time to cut out Vere."

"Pshaw! not the least chance of that. How would it be if I cut in myself! A game's never lost till one side has won."

With a knowing glance at his friend, Lord Fitzhugh hurried to the corner where Dulcie was standing, with a knot of men round her.

"This is our dance, Miss Arkwright," he said, mendaciously.

"I beg your pardon," looking demurely down at her programme, "but have you changed your name to Brown?"

"Yes, during the last half-hour. Don't let us waste any time, the dance has begun."

"If you will be good enough to step on one side," said Colonel Brown with a broad smile, "we will begin at once."

And, slipping his arm round Dulcie's small waist, they glided off past the disconsolate Viscount, slowly, and in perfect time to the soft, melancholy waltz.

Mets, as the heiress of the Somerville acres, was sure to have plenty of partners, and she enjoyed herself after her usually quiet fashion, pleased with this man's steps and that other man's pleasant chatter, and happy beyond expression when Godfrey did his duty by her and asked her for the first dance.

She could not see the signs of the coming storm, though Somerville's face was deadly white and Nella's pale and thoughtful; though Dulcie, every now and then, in the midst of jest and laughter, gave a quivering sigh of fear, and Mr. Mallon seemed turned into a stone statue, as he leant in silence that he rarely broke, against the doorway.

To some amongst them the whole scene was like the feasting and revelry before the deluge. Above the notes of waltzes rose the groan of a shipwrecked hope, and mixed with the sound of the loudest laughter, was the sob of a girl's despair.

Dulcie shivered with a passing thrill of fear as, for the first time that evening, her lover wound his arm round her and drew her gently to his heart. To lose him now, after this one wild ray of hope, would be more hard to bear than all the desolation of the past.

"Are you cold, dear?" he asked, in surprise.

"No, only frightened," smiling with pale lips.

"Go on—to think is dangerous."

When the waltz was over, their steps went involuntarily to the conservatory. There, side by side, amongst the flowers, they sat for one happy quarter-of-an-hour, with so much to say to each other, yet few words on their lips; their eyes exchanging wistful glances, their hearts too full for speech, divinely content, because for a few minutes they were at last together.

Only a few yards off stood Vere, his fair head making havoc amongst the white blossoms of a camellia, as he stood by his cousin's side, and gave her, in his usual bungling fashion, a piece of his mind.

"Of course it's no good my saying anything," he remarked, crossly, "but I can tell you, that before this time to-morrow you will be sorry."

She shook her head.

"I shan't be sorry, because I am doing it with my eyes open."

"You think there's no harm in marrying a scoundrel, if you know all about it first?" his eyes flashing resentfully.

"Who talks about marrying! Surely I may talk civilly to a man for a few minutes; I may accept the flowers which he has taken the trouble to order from town; and I may dance once or twice with him in the course of an evening without being burdened with him for the rest of my life!"

How pretty she looked with the light playing on her reproachful eyes, and the fairness of her neck, and yet he hardened his heart against her.

"You might do all these things," he said, sternly, "and I should be the last man to say a word against you; but you have encouraged him shamelessly till you are almost bound to marry him, in order to save your character."

"Cyrl, you go too far," and she threw back her head in passionate anger.

"You have gone further than any modest, pure-minded—"

"Hush! you shan't say that!" her bosom heaving under her lace. "I have done nothing that I would be afraid to confess to your mother. You don't understand; some day you will," with a strangled sob, "and then you will be sorry."

"If I could by any possibility be mistaken—if I could believe that eyes and ears had both misled me, I shouldn't be sorry, but gladder than I ever was before. But this is nonsense," his voice hardening like his heart. "You have chosen to compromise yourself with the only villain of your acquaintance and you must take the consequences."

"I am quite prepared. What a comfort that you will be too far away in India to see them."

"I am not there yet," coldly.

"No, I only wish you were, and then," her lips trembling, "I should never have known how disagreeable you could be."

"Disagreeable! Simply because I do my duty!"

"Duty is always a pretence for the unkindest, meanest cuts of all."

"I wonder that you know anything about it. Do it to-night; send Somerville about his business, and be something like the girl you used to be at Elstone," his tone softening, the harsh look melting from his eyes.

"I am doing it," she said, proudly, "but not in the cold, pharisaical way you wish. Whatever my faults, it has never been my way to kick a man when he was down."

Godfrey came up at the moment, and held out his arm, bending down to whisper something in her ear.

She placed her hand on his coat-sleeve with her most winning smile, in reckless defiance of Vere's presence, and without another look at her cousin suffered him to lead her back into the drawing-room.

"Never my way to kick a man when he was down!" the words lingered strangely in Cyrl's ears. "Had she heard anything? Could she have guessed? and had pity more to do with it, after all, than love?"

These were problems which puzzled his brain, whilst the faintest ray of light, no bigger than a glow-worm's star, twinkled through the darkness.

## CHAPTER XLIX.

Two o'clock! the fatal hour was approaching.

Victor was grave, with overpowering emotion, and Dulcie went about through the brilliantly-lighted ball-room, with lips as white as her dress.

"Is Somerville mad or drunk?" and Vere leant wearily, more tired in mind than body against the wall by his friend's side.

"Don't know, I'm sure. Off his head somehow," his eyes following his enemy with a vindictive glance as he disappeared into the conservatory, bending in earnest conversation over the troubled face beside him.

"He has crushed his little cousin, till she looks like a limp rag."

"And yours!" rousing himself to take an interest in Vere's affairs, as well as his own.

"Not crushed, but infatuated," with a heavy sigh. "What shall we do if we can't get rid of him?"

"Take him with us, and face it out as best we can. In less than half-an-hour we ought to start!"

"Yes, I must soon be looking after Lady Somerville. It would be as well to send off the landau first."

"Want a partner?" and Jack Arkwright caught hold of him by the coat-sleeve. "Come along, I've got the jolliest little girl in the room all ready for you, and she's a stunning dancer!"

"Dance with her yourself. I've done my duty thoroughly," trying to shake him off.

"Duty be hanged! She's too good for you by half. Here she is, Captain Vere, Miss Stevenson. He's an old chum of mine, so pray be good



SLOWLY AND SORROWFULLY GODFREY SOMERVILLE RODE HOME ALONE.

to him," and with a regular look he darted off to find another victim, leaving Cyril in the hands of a burly country damsel, who looked as if she could manage him.

Meta was sitting by the side of a most uninteresting partner when Godfrey came up to her, and told her that Lady Somerville was ready to go. She rose obediently, delighted to have his escort, and without waiting to say good-bye to anyone, for he seemed in a great hurry, ran upstairs to put on her cloak. He was waiting for her at the bottom of the stairs when she came down, and gave her his arm to the hall door.

"Where's Nella?" she asked, as she caught sight of her mother inside the carriage and her father standing by the door.

"Coming," he said, briefly.  
"Get in, my dear—get in," exclaimed Sir Edward, who was always in a hurry when starting.  
"Where's the other one?"

"With Vere, I fancy," said Godfrey, carelessly.  
"How fidgety old Spider gets! He can't stand for a moment!"

"No more he ought on such a night as this! Just go and see if you can find her."

Somerville departed, but presently returned, saying that there was not a trace of Miss Maynard to be seen.

The old Baronet got in a fuss, and said they must go without her.

"Oh, my dear!" remonstrated his wife, "I don't like to leave her alone with only the gentlemen!"

"You won't leave her, for we are coming at once," said Godfrey, bundling his uncle into the carriage, and shutting the door after him. "Surely Vere can take care of her if I can't!"

"Girl's own fault," muttered Sir Edward, as he drew up the glass.

Then the footman took his place on the box, and Somerville drew a deep breath of relief as the horses started forward, and the landau rolled quickly down the drive.

"Now for it," he said to himself, as he tossed off a glass of champagne in the supper-room in

order to brace his nerves. "Everything depends on my luck during the next ten minutes."

Then he went off to cast his last die for love and life!

Only a quarter of an hour before he had been sitting by Nella's side in the most secluded corner of the conservatory. The light of the lamp overhead worried him. He jumped up and blew it out.

"What did you do that for?" she exclaimed, nervously. "I am neither afraid of seeing or of being seen."

"There is enough light to see you by, and prying eyes I detest!" Then there was a long silence.

Only a far-off murmur of music came to that distant corner, and the rest of the conservatory was nearly empty.

Nella's heart was full of anxiety for others and bitter pain for herself. By her misguided generosity she had forfeited her own happiness and Meta's. That simple-hearted, unsuspecting, innocent girl was trembling in the balance.

Godfrey's eyes were wandering over her, taking in every charm as they went, and his wild heart was throbbing with a thousand hopes and fears. At last he spoke, and his voice was hoarse, as a man's voice is apt to be when his heart is stirred to its depths.

"You might love me a little to-night, Nella, if only because it's the last time."

"As if I could put it on and off like a pair of gloves"—her eyes met his and sank.

"You might put it on"—bending closer—"just to give a fellow one gleam of light before the darkness."

"Lightning only makes the night-scene darker."

"But stars don't, Nella!" she felt his hot breath on her cheek and shrank away. "I would have given up everything for you!"

"I wish I could think you were sorry for the evil you had done," she said, gravely, looking away from him, at the spiral frond of a fern.

"I am sorry for nothing, except that it doesn't

last to the end. I don't think I could rest in my grave if Maltravers gets off scot free!"

"You are not in your grave yet. There may be long years before you, which Heaven has given you for repentance! Oh, Godfrey, don't you believe in Heaven!"

"Yes, sometimes," with a slight smile. "Now, for instance, when you are close to me!"

She got up from the seat.

"If you talk so profanely I won't stay with you!"

"Sit down and I'll do anything you like. Don't you know it is an angel's mission to reclaim a sinner?"

"But I'm not an angel."

"Aren't you? I fancy them very like you. He got up slowly and stood by her side; then pulled out his watch and looked at it. "Past two o'clock on Wednesday morning; by half-past three I shall be dead to all who have either cursed or blessed me—dead to little Meta, who has always been good to me—dead to my uncle and aunt, who, in spite of all their stupid prejudice, treated me like a son! If I were really on my death-bed you would refuse me nothing! Can't you fancy it now, and let me touch your lips with mine?"

"No!" shrinking back amongst the camellia leaves. "Give it to Meta!"

"Meta! whom I've kissed a hundred times in my life!"

"But she loves you so!"

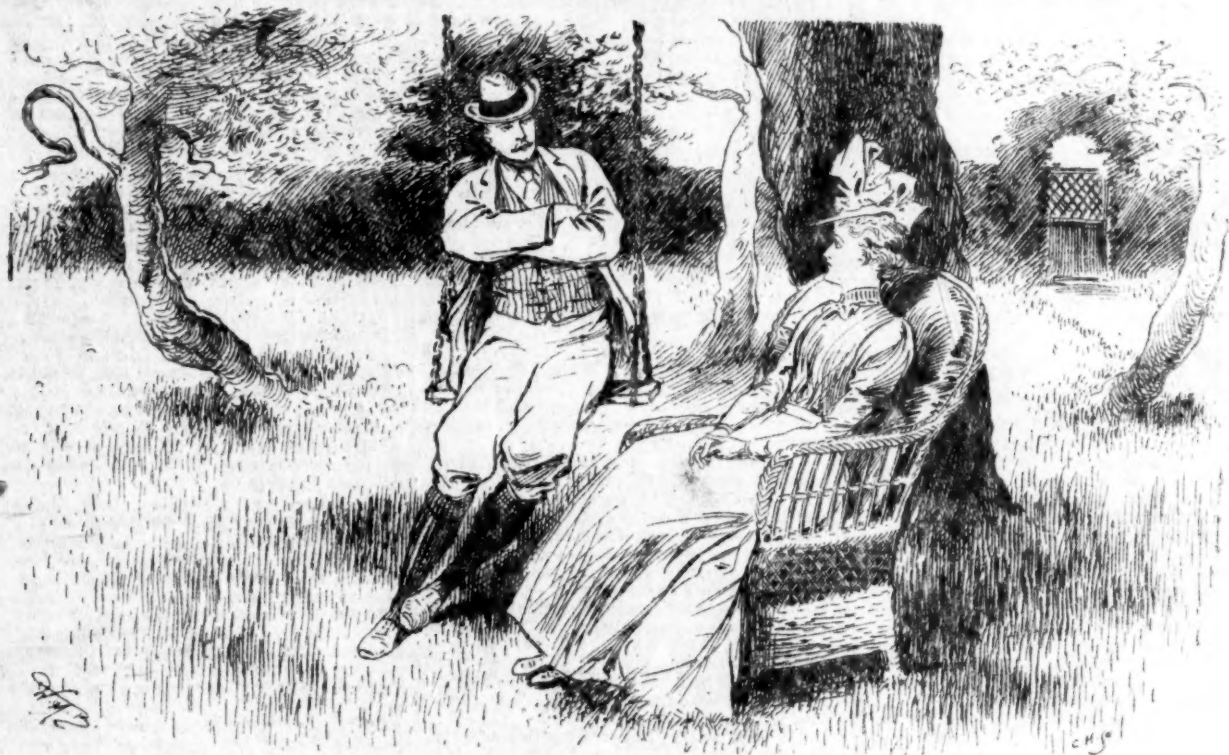
That was an accepted fact to be passed by without remark, and treated as such love most often is, with unheeding indifference.

"Just one," he pleaded, his dark eyes glowing as if with inward fire; and then he bent his head and took it, his heart bounding with joy, whilst hers became like a stone.

"Good-bye!" she said, faintly; and then added, "Take me back to Lady Somerville," as she stooped low over her roses.

(To be continued.)





"I REALLY DO THINK I DESERVE A LITTLE FITT FOR MY STUPID MISTAKE!" COLIN SAID.

## BROWN EYES AND BLUE.

### CHAPTER IV.

"MISS CELIA, here's Miss Barlow come to see you," says Prudence, poking her frilled cap into the little room adjoining father's library, which is especially my own *sanctum sanctorum*, and where, this summer afternoon, I lie curled up on the deep oak window-seat, busily engaged in rubbing some coins bright for father to decipher some old inscription on them.

"Oh! I am glad, Prue! I'll come directly," I exclaim with alacrity, putting the coins back in their box until another leisure moment, and getting off the window-seat.

Miss Hannah Barlow is the dearest and sweetest old lady anyone could desire to meet in a long day's march. There is nothing whatever of "crabbed age" about her many years. Her hair, silver-white, powdered by Time himself, she wears in little short curls under her lace cap, and a muslin kerchief always encircles her neck, making her look like some pretty old picture of ages ago. When you hear her pleasant, chiming voice—never soured, never bitter, always kindly—you feel that she means everything she says. No honeyed phrases uttered for the nonce.

Her brother, the Reverend Stephen Barlow, is rector of East Marling, whose house she keeps, for he is a bachelor. He is many years Miss Hannah's junior, and she treats him even now like a big boy more than a man of years—settling everything for him as she would have done had he still been in the nursery.

Rumour—whose tongue is always busy—has it, with what truth I cannot say, being then too young to judge myself, that when Aunt Rachel first came to Gable End she tried her fascinations on Stephen Barlow. Whether aunt found him obdurate, or whether Miss Hannah stepped in and turned the shafts of winged love aside, I know not. This I do know, that there is no love lost between aunt and Miss Hannah. It is

a thrust and parry between them when they meet, for Miss Hannah's clear sense can pierce through aunt's machinations. Outwardly, they are courteous to a degree. Miss Hannah could not hurt a fly; aunt would not from policy—therein lies all the difference.

Stephen Barlow is one of those kind-hearted, gentle-souled clerics, who would fall easily enough into any matrimonial snare set for them, and, once in, make no effort to get out again. He is, however, I honestly believe, completely contented to be managed by his sister, and desires no other housekeeper, and nothing in the shape of a wife, for the remaining term of his natural life.

I think aunt quite recognises the hopelessness of her ever becoming rectress of East Marling, and guardian angel of the village. I believe she attributes primary failure to Miss Hannah, and bears her a grudge inwardly. A cat always sheathes its claws.

For more than a week past I have seen nothing of the Barlows, for they have been away, staying in Gloucestershire with some old friends, so Miss Hannah told me when she came to bid me good-bye before they left Marling.

I suppose that Mr. Barlow, having taken his clergyman's week, has returned home for to-morrow's duty, which accounts for the appearance of Miss Hannah, whom I am always unforgottenly glad to see. I can talk to her as if she were of my own age, feeling nothing incongruous in my confessions; confiding my small woes—of which, truth to tell, I have never had many—into her dear old sympathetic ear, and feel the happier for my unburdening. So I cry, very joyfully, as I enter the Gable End drawing-room—

"I am pleased to see you, dear Miss Hannah! How good of you to walk over all this way on a hot afternoon. You must be quite baked. But I am glad you have come."

"Thank you, dear Celia!" she returns, rising to greet me, and kissing me on each cheek, French fashion. "And now"—seating herself

on an old-fashioned chintz-covered ottoman, and pulling me beside her—"sit down here, and tell me all about this morning. I want to hear the whole story from the beginning."

"Tell you about this morning!" I echo, thinking it impossible she can refer to my comedy, for how could she know anything about it?

"Yes!" she goes on, patting my hand lying in hers; "a little bird told me all about it, or, rather, I ought to say a big bird gave me such a garbled account of something or other that happened this morning by the river that I have come to you to hear the meaning of it all."

"Oh!" I rejoice, a dawning smile on my lips; "I suppose you mean the fisherman and the watercrees gatherer. How did you know?"

"Because Mr. Boughton told me, dear. I must tell you, Stephen and I came home from Gloucestershire the night before last, and brought Colin Boughton with us. His father was an old college friend of Stephen's that he had not met for many years, and staying with his son in the same house. My brother and I took such a fancy to him that we asked him to come back with us for a week or two for some fishing, of which he is very fond. I had intended bringing him over to call yesterday afternoon, but was prevented at the last moment. Just at lunch time he came in to me in the greatest agitation of mind, giving me, as I tell you, a garbled account, of which I could neither make head or tail. At last he mentioned the name of Celia, and it struck me at once that he might mean yourself."

"Yes!" I put in laughing; "it was myself, and no one else."

"Questioning him further, and making him describe this damsel he spoke of—and I must tell you he gave quite a flattering description of you, mademoiselle—I knew at once it must be my Celia Lascelles; and I told him what old friends we were, and that it would be all right. But that seemed to frighten him quite; he said that really he was immensely sorry to leave us, but

he must go. Nothing I could say would make him alter his determination, he'd made such a fool of himself; and the bare idea of meeting or seeing you again seemed to fill him with dismay."

"Poor me. What a Gorgon I must be, Miss Hannah, mustn't I! Perhaps he'll alter his mind about going by the time you get back."

"My dear child, I left him in the act of packing up his things preparatory to a flitting either this evening or the first thing to-morrow morning. I am sure he really means to go."

"I am terribly sorry"—wrinkling up my brows in a favourite fashion of my own—"that is, I am sorry if it is my fault: what can I do!"

"Well, dear, I want you to come back with me to the Rectory, and try your persuasive powers to make matters straight. I am sure he'll stay if you ask him"—smiling slyly at me—"beside, I think as you are the objective cause of his departure, you are the best person to beg him to remain. What say you?" turning her dear old face to mine.

"By all means, Miss Hannah," I acquiesce, blithely; "of course, I'll come if you wish me to. Am I not always ready and willing to do anything in the world for you? You don't ever ask me to do half enough."

At this juncture in seats Aunt Rachel—softly, puringly, gracefully.

"How do you do, Miss Barlow! I am charmed to see you. Celia, sweetest! why did you not call me directly Miss Barlow came!" with a glance at me.

"I had no idea you were here," she goes on, addressing Miss Hannah, "otherwise I should have come at once. Prudence happened to mention that you were in the drawing-room, when I was in the store-room just now, otherwise I should not have known it at all."

Aunt speaks as if seeing Miss Hannah was the one end and aim of her whole existence.

"Perhaps I am the most to blame, Mrs. Lucelles," returns her ohining voice, "for I confess to having asked for Celia. I thought you might be busy and not care to be bothered with visitors."

"Do not say that, Miss Barlow," purrs aunt, smoothly, "you know how welcome you always are at Gable End."

"As much as you are at the Rectory," says Miss Hannah, smiling, knowing that aunt detects the sight of her; "but I really came to carry off Celia for the afternoon and evening."

"She will be too delighted, I am sure. Will you not, Celia, precious!" unctuously.

"I want to introduce her to a young friend of mine who is staying with us. We brought him back from Gloucestershire with us the night before last," looking at me.

"Oh! a gentleman!" inquires aunt, a trifle less sweetly.

"Yes, the son of an old college friend of Mr. Barlow's, a Mr. Collin Boughton."

"Indeed!" as if waiting for further information.

"He is such a nice young fellow. So genial and pleasant. I am certain he and Celia will get on capitally together."

"No doubt," a trifle coldly from aunt.

She has an unwarrantable dislike to anything in the shape of a young man. I suppose she thinks they might or might not be a spoke in Michael's wheel. Anyway, when any of that kind appear at Gable End, they are made to feel de trop in a smoothly polite way.

"The Boughtons are a very good old family, but no money, unfortunately for them. However, birth and breeding count for something even in this money-loving age. Nineteenth century money won't make a real true-hearted gentleman, and Collin is certainly that," ends Miss Hannah, warmly.

"Possibly," returns aunt, chilly, "not having the pleasure of Mr. Boughton's acquaintance, I am not in a position to judge of his merits or demerits. No doubt he is all and everything you say. By the bye, Celia, precious, I quite forgot when Miss Barlow asked you to spend the afternoon with her, that I expect Lady Vacher to call. I should be sorry for her to find you out when she came, and she might consider it rude, and that you were out on purpose," very pur-

ringly, as if suddenly recollecting something she had hitherto forgotten. "I dare say Miss Barlow will allow you to come some other day instead, and have tea with her."

By this speech I recognized at once that aunt is averse to my going to the Rectory, but will not openly say so. She loveth the crooked way better far than the straight one.

"You needn't be at all alarmed on that score," puts in Miss Hannah, quickly. "I know Lady Vacher will not call at Gable End this afternoon, because an hour back I left her in bed with one of her bad neuralgic attacks, where she intends remaining."

"Dear me, I am sorry to hear that. I know she suffers very much with neuralgia," returns aunt, sweetly. "Then, of course, Celia, darling, I have nothing to say against your going if you wish to."

"You need not trouble to send for her. I will see she comes home safely. Stephen shall bring her back, if that is all. She will be quite safe," emphasises Miss Hannah, which is a tiny thrust back at aunt for trying to prevent my going.

"Thank you very much, indeed, Miss Barlow," answers aunt, stately, feeling her defeat. "I have no doubt of Celia's safety, otherwise, of course, I could not think of letting her come; but I always feel myself morally responsible to my dear brother-in-law for his child's welfare, and you, therefore, must allow me send my son Michael for her."

I know by aunt's extra purr that she would dearly like to unheath those velvet paws of hers and give Miss Hannah a good scratch; however, she says in her most amiable tone,—

"You had better go at once and put on your things, sweetest; and not keep Miss Barlow waiting for you."

As I go out of the door I hear her softly inquiring after Mr. Barlow's health, and Miss Hannah's dulcet tones informing her that her brother was never better in his life, much better than if he had a wife to worry him.

In another quarter of an hour Miss Hannah and I are trotting down the Marling-road arm-in-arm. It is almost a two-mile walk to the Rectory, but a very pleasant one. By the scented meadows and hedgerows, through Marling Wood, where the hazel trees are blossoming, and wild honeysuckle makes the air rich and sweet with perfume, until we at last come in sight of the long, low-bellied, rambling, two-storied house, in which Stephen Barlow lives gratis and rent-free by permission of a large-hearted, liberal Government.

The green-painted, five-barred swing gate stands open for us, and as we pass down the smooth gravel walk towards the house I begin to experience a faint, quavery feeling at heart.

Supposing, oh! supposing, after all, brown eyes should be disagreeable, and flatly decline to have anything to say to ering me. Imagine if he says, "No, I've been made a fool of once, I'll take precious good care you don't get the opportunity again!" Was I really to blame! Perhaps so. At any rate, however he may receive me, whatever he may say or do, I must make the best of it.

"Miss Hannah, does Mr. Boughton know that you are going to bring me back?" I hazard, as we get nearer and nearer the house.

"He doesn't even know I want to fetch you, dear," she answers, glibly. "I ever doubt if he knew I was out at all. I thought, under the circumstances, it would be better to give him a surprise."

"I suppose you thought if you told him your errand beforehand he might run away at once to avoid me," I say, laughing ruefully, "for no one cares to be a bugbear." "Poor, harmless Celia! I never imagined any man would think it worth while to run away from such a country mouse as I am. Hadn't you better prepare him for my appearance, dear Miss Hannah!" feeling a half-hearted desire to shirk the meeting at the last moment. "I can wait in the drawing-room until you call me."

"No, it's part of my little plan that you should take him by surprise. You see"—jokingly—"he can't run away then. Besides, I do not think after the first five minutes he will want to"—

nodding her aliver-white head sagaciously—"now, we must find out where he is first. I expect somewhere in the garden—he's generally to be found thereabouts—or the garden-orchard, where the swing is. We'll take a peep there to begin with," pushing open a lattice door leading into a walled-off portion of the Rectory garden, christened the garden-orchard by reason of its apple, pear, and plum trees in all their wealth of fruit.

She passes through first, I meekly following her, my heart in my boots. All my vaunted valour evaporated, like water in the sun.

Sitting in the swing, which is hung by big chains from a splendid old walnut tree, his feet resting on the ground, smoking the inevitable cigarette, is the fisherman, looking as if he was in a day-dream, probably about his fish.

"Ah, Collin, so here you are!" cries Miss Hannah, trotting up to him, and talking quickly. "I have brought a very dear little friend of mine to be introduced to you—Miss Celia Lucelles. Now, I want you to be very good friends, and amuse each other for a few minutes while I go in, take off my walking things, and tell Sarah to bring the tea out here. I think it will be pleasanter out here than indoors," and away she trots again to the house.

He had started to his feet the instant he heard Miss Hannah's voice saying, "Ah, Collin, so here you are!" then catching sight of me just behind her, a dark red flush burnt his face as Miss Hannah, going on to introduce me, he threw away his cigarette and bowed.

We now stand stock still, staring at each other, not a single syllable between us. I am not garbed in an old cotton dress and sun-bonnet this afternoon, but he knows me again perfectly. Is he waiting for me to speak first, or am I waiting for him?

Then suddenly my heart rises from my boots. Somehow those brown eyes cannot be so very terrible. I move forward two steps, hold out my hand, look up with an apologetic smile into his face and say,—

"Forgive me, I am very sorry."

Then—and mind you only then—his very dignified air and manner relaxes. Once more he becomes the genial, kindly-spoken brown eyes of the riverside. He smiles too, takes my proffered hand, and gives it a warm shake.

"So am I," he returns, heartily, "very sorry indeed that I was such an idiot as to mistake you for a village Phyllis. I can't think how I could have been so egregiously blind and stupid," looking at me from head to foot. "What must you have thought of me?"

"It was all my fault," I return, magnanimously. "I can quite understand your mistake, say, right well, master," with a return to the Norfolk lingo just for fun, at which we both laugh heartily, while I draw a basket chair to me, and he reseats himself in the swing.

"It was horribly idiotic of me, though. Fancy my daring to hail you with 'Hi, little girl!' You see, I perceived something feminine in the distance."

"With an awful old gown and sun-bonnet on," I interrupt gleefully.

"And I was so wrapt up in the loss of that wretched bait that I didn't take the trouble to look what kind of feminine it was. Then when I did at last, as I thought, make you understand, you answered me in that fearful lingo; so I do really think I deserve a little pity for my mistake, stupid as it undoubtedly was."

"It was the lingo that did it. I could not resist the temptation."

"Don't you confess it was very cruel of you to hoax me like that! What a capital actress you would make! You were the country girl to the very life."

"So I am a country girl, Mr. Boughton. I certainly did not act a part there."

"And that bob curtsy when I gave you that miserable, humiliating expance. It was infinitely able. I don't believe I've seen anything better on the stage than that."

"You must not flatter my acting so much, or I shall begin to think seriously of taking to the boards for a livelihood," I say, laughing. "But concerning that same expance, I wonder you don't



have me taken up for obtaining money under false pretences."

"That would be a finishing stroke to the whole business, wouldn't it? I've half a mind to follow your good advice, and hand you over to the local bobby for confinement in the village durance vile, that is, if Marling possesses such accommodation for the wholesale criminal."

"Seriously, though, Mr. Boughton, let me restore the sapphire to its rightful owner, now I am about it. I shall not be completely happy in my mind until I know it's safely back in your pocket. Indeed, I brought it with me for the very purpose," taking it out of my pocket and tendering it to him. "Please take it."

He waves it off.

"Horrible little coin!" he exclaims, with gusto; "primary cause of my undoing. Don't let me see its hideous little face, I implore you, Miss Lascelles. The sight of that sapphire gives me a cold shiver down my spinal marrow. Give it to the first *bona fide* villager you meet going home. Besides, all things considered, it isn't my property, veritably speaking. A labourer is worthy of his hire, and you know you can't deny that you fairly earned it," and the brown eyes gaze wickedly mischievous at me.

"I never deny the truth, and as it is most certainly the first and only money I have ever earned in my useless life, I'll keep it as a constant reminder that I can work when I choose."

"If you really and truly wish to earn your own living, Miss Lascelles, I am prepared to engage you upon the same terms until further notice," he urges, somewhat eagerly.

"To be honest, it was Peter, our gardener's boy, who earned the sapphire, for he dug the bait. I nearly threw the tin away several times on my way back to you; the worms wriggled so fearfully, and looked so horrid. I had more than half a mind, too, not to return at all," I add, as an afterthought.

"I'm intensely glad you did," he exclaims, heartily, evidently quite forgetful of his late discomfiture. "Imagine me, an eager fisherman, expectant of those same worms, waiting for the bait that never came; imagine those little perch, of which I afterwards caught three, waiting in vain for their succulent tit-bit. No; I am very glad, indeed, you did come back."

In my heart of hearts, I think, I am very glad, too, but I do not utter my thoughts aloud. So we chat on; and thus, when Miss Hannah presently appears, with her garden hat on, followed by Sarah with the tea, she finds us the very best of friends.

She makes no comment of any kind, however, on our reconciliation, I might almost call it, nor asks us how we have amused ourselves during her absence; only smooths my locks with her hand, for I have divested my head of its Sunday hat, which I donned in lieu of the fatal sun-bonnet, and says, pleasantly,—

"Did you think I and Sarah were never coming with the tea? Old Mrs. Hubbard, the clerk's wife at Roudham, came in to get some flannel for her rheumatism, and kept me talking with her some time. After tea you must go, Colin to give you a swing. Celia adores swinging," turning to him.

"Do you?" looking at me.

"Yes; am I not a big baby? It is perfectly delicious to feel oneself going through the air touching the leaves."

"I shall be delighted to swing you as much and as often as you like, Miss Lascelles. I've a good deal of muscle which requires developing, and I should imagine swinging was as good as dumb-bells, and better fun. I'll swing you all the day long if you wish."

I mentally comment that this offer does not chime in exactly with his determination to leave the Rectory to-morrow. In fact, I believe he's forgotten all about that; however, I hold my peace, and answer, soberly,—

"Thanks very much, Mr. Boughton; but I won't make a martyr of you to that extent. It would be cruelty to animals; the society would have me up."

"I am quite content to be an animal," he returns, with a glance from those very brown

eyes, "a beast of burden, and I don't think you will work me too hard."

"No, you may trust me so far," I answer, looking at Sarah bringing the old Queen Anne silver teapot, which is one of Miss Hannah's especial treasures.

Mr. Barlow joins us, and we place ourselves round the impromptu tea-table.

"Let me cut the bread-and-butter, Miss Hannah," I say, gaily, taking up a knife and the home-baked brown loaf. "Father always says I cut thin bread-and-butter better than anyone at Gable End."

"Do, dear," she returns, cream-jug in hand, for the yellow cream is so thick it has to be ladled out with a little spoon.

"By all means let us have a specimen of your prowess in the art of thin bread-and-butter cutting; and I'll help the honeycomb, not to be idle. You remind me of that little poem about Werter's Charlotte. Do you remember it?"

"Yes, you mean"—stopping short, knife in one hand, and quoting,—

"Werter had a love for Charlotte, such as words could never utter,  
Would you know how first he met her? She was eating bread-and-butter."

Which does not exactly apply in this case, does it?"

"Why not?" he remarks innocently, giving Mr. Barlow a wedge of golden honeycomb.

"Because we happen to have met before," I argue, mildly, going on with my cutting.

"Ah, yes! well, perhaps so. Let me see, though, the finale of the poem was most harrowing, wasn't it? How does it run?"

"So he sighed, and pined, and grieved, and his passion boiled and bubbled.  
Till he blew his silly brains out, and was no more by it troubled."

Am I right, Miss Lascelles?" taking his cup from Miss Hannah.

"Quite right. But you've not quoted all of it," I respond, laughingly.

"Charlotte, when she saw his body, borne before her on a shutter,  
Like a well-conducted person, went on cutting bread-and-butter."

And I flourish my knife.

"I wonder if you would be like cruel Charlotte!" he questions, helping himself to two slices doubled over. "Supposing you were to see my hapless corse carried out of that gate, would you go on calmly spreading the butter, and carving wafers of slices of brown bread?" melodramatically.

"I can't say what I should do. But the circumstances are all so different that there is no parallel to be drawn that I can see. Do you, Miss Hannah?" appealing to her.

"Not at present, dear, certainly," she rejoins, pouring out Mr. Barlow his second cup of tea; "but I should not think there would be any necessity for Colin to blow his brains out like poor lovesick, lovelorn Werter. I think Charlotte must have been a very hard-hearted girl to behave as she did. I don't believe my little Celia could follow such a cruel example."

"Well spoken, Miss Hannah!" chimes in Mr. Boughton, approvingly. "Miss Lascelles, another slice of that wondrous brown bread-and-butter, please. I never thought I was so fond of bread-and-butter before."

"The staff of life," mildly puts in Mr. Barlow, beginning his third cup of tea. "Hannah, my dear, talking of bread, remember that David Hoare has three loaves instead of two next Saturday, will you? And Jane Moxon is to come every morning for half-a-pint of milk for her grandmother's gruel."

Miss Hannah registers it in her memory, and with this our discussion anent Werter and Charlotte comes to a finale, together with the tea.

How pleasant it all is. How luscious and sweet the honeycomb!—how nice the home-baked bread and freshly-churned butter!—how refreshing the tea, eaten and drunk *al fresco* under the shade of the old walnut tree! Never, surely, was time so happy.

Then we all stroll round the garden, smell the

lavender, look at the ripening fruit, wander from the orchard to the pond, where broods of yellow, fluffy ducklings disport themselves on the placid surface; back again to the garden orchard where I have my swing, and go ever so much higher than ever Michael sends me, to my intense delight.

Lastly comes gentle gloaming, and supper in the Rectory dining-room, after which Mr. Boughton and I play spellikins, while Miss Hannah watches our game, knitting swiftly socks for brother Stephen. We all scream merrily over the shakes and mistakes in our arithmetic on counting up, and generally enjoy ourselves. At least I know I do thoroughly, which is perhaps one advantage of being of a babyish turn of mind.

Finally Michael appears, like the warning ghost in *Hamlet*, to take me home by the light of the moon. Mr. Boughton thinks he'll come too, and Miss Hannah says it's such a lovely night they will all come part of the way with us, which I am only too glad of, as I do not feel inclined for a long *tête-à-tête* with Michael.

We troop down the Marling road, which now lies in deep shadow, and again in the flooding silver moonbeams. Michael stalks on one side of me, Miss Hannah next him, Mr. Barlow beyond, and Colin Boughton on the other side of me. Michael has the air of a gendarme marshalling his prisoner along to the Bastille.

Since his introduction to Mr. Boughton at the Rectory he has barely acknowledged his presence, save for an occasional yes and no to questions addressed to him, necessitating an answer of some kind.

Once or twice I have noticed the brown eyes attentively regarding my cousin with the faintest smile of amusement at his want of friendliness. A smile, however, which, as Michael keeps his face straight before him, when not turned in Miss Hannah's direction, he is not conscious of.

When we emerge from Marling Wood and reach the first Gable End meadow, the Barlows and Mr. Boughton wish us good-night.

Miss Hannah and Mr. Barlow are arranging some choir question with Michael, who marshals them on Sundays, as Colin Boughton and I shake hands last of all.

"Good-night, Miss Celia," he says, low-voiced, holding my hand for a second longer than is absolutely necessary to him. "Is that Lubin?" he asks, in an undertone, looking down straight into my face.

"Lubin!" I echoed after him, then I add quickly, "why do you want to know?"

"Natural curiosity, I suppose. I am right, then?" releasing my hand.

"I'm sure I don't know," I return, wrinkling my brows, which is hardly the truth, because I do know very well, only I don't see why I should say so. "Why should it be Lubin?" I demand again, not exactly satisfied in my own mind that his first question was one that I quite appreciate.

"In Arcadia every Phyllis has her Damon, every Chloe her Strephon, every village Phoebe her Lubin. Good-night, Miss Lascelles," in a louder tone, and Michael looms black on us in the moonbeams, throwing his shadow right between us two.

Long after we have separated, they going their way, Michael and I ours, I hear dear Miss Hannah's ringing voice through the summer night, and Colin Boughton's deeper man's tones in response.

Mr. Barlow I do not hear, but that is not remarkable. He seldom is heard except in the pulpit, and there he is impressive enough. I give a little sigh to myself, for somehow they seem to take away all the sweetness and brightness of the summer night with them.

"I have had such a pleasant time, Michael," I say aloud, the next moment.

"Indeed, Celia. I am very glad to hear it," he answers, not manifesting any particular gladness of voice though.

"Mr. Boughton is such a splendid swinger," I go on, cheerfully, brightening up at the recollection. "I went ever so high—much higher than you ever send me."

"Perhaps Mr. Boughton does not particularly

care whether you fall out of the swing and break your neck. I, on the contrary, do care," he replied, coldly.

"Well, he may not care, as you say; but he is very nice, all the same," I put in, irritably, knowing that my cousin won't appreciate it—"very nice, indeed, and I like him," emphatically.

But Michael won't pick up the glove thrown down as a gage of defiance, and remains sternly silent. I wait about two minutes, then, as if communing with the night and entrusting my thoughts to its moonlight care, I repeat once more,—

"Yes, very nice!"

So saying we reach Gable End gate.

(To be continued.)

## A DAUGHTER OF THE PEOPLE.

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(Continued from page 511.)

"We shall be best apart; away from her I shall recover my lost strength; I shall forget!"

He knew that he lied to himself on that thing, but he was fain to believe the lie, and to find comfort in it. He started the following day for Calais, alone, feeling then that any society would have been intolerable. His fellow-passengers regarded him curiously as he strode up and down the deck, taciturn, grave almost to sternness, and some of them wondered why those fine, dark eyes should be so sombre, why he held aloof from all, speaking rarely, and smiling never.

On the day on which he reached Paris he little dreamed how sorely Jean needed his friendship, his sympathy, or he would have hastened back to England, although by so doing he might materially have damaged her cause.

It was a lovely day, very early in May, and "my lady" sat with the Duchess, both apparently engaged with some fancy-work. But the hearts of both beat fast with ill-concealed anxiety, for on this sunny morning Greatorex had promised to make some arrangement with his wife. She expected Mr. Ballafoz; consequently, when his lordship was announced, she started up, ghastly and trembling; neither had looked on the other's face since that night following the Horticultural Fete. The Duchess rose, too, and passed her arm about Jean, so the two women stood and confronted the angry, dissipated-looking man it was Jean's misfortune to call husband.

He did not pause to greet her Grace, but turning upon "my lady" fiercely, said,—

"Put on your things and come with me; you have stayed here too long already."

"What are you going to do with me?" she asked, with pallid lips.

"Take you from those who have upheld you in your rebellion; and—and your crime," my lady. From this hour you may say good-bye to your estimable friends, for you shall never see them any more," with a fearful oath. "You have made me a byword and a laughing-stock, and I will make you regret doing so to the hour of your death!"

"Your lordship forgets that from the time you use threats her ladyship can appeal against you," interposed the Duchess, trembling with indignation. But Jean laid her hand upon her arm,—

"Hush, my dear friend," she said, "you will but make my lot the harder. He is my husband, and I must go with him."

"Sorely against your will!" Greatorex remarked with a brutal laugh. "I'm a modern Bluebeard, of course, and you an immaculate, spotless wife! You have never listened to fond words from Ormsby. Ah!" as she put her hands up to hide her woe-stricken face, "your conscience accuses you!"

She lifted herself erect then.

"Spare me any further indignity," she said, coldly and quietly. "I have always been true to you in thought and deed. I will go with you

now, although I fear that you will make my life terrible."

With steady step she went out and up to her own room. She dressed herself with trembling fingers, but her eyes were dry and her lips set hard. Then she went down to rejoin "my lord."

He was standing before a window, his hands thrust into his pockets, whilst the Duchess regarded him with loathing and hate, of which he seemed quite unconscious.

Jean went to her, and put her arms about her.

"My dear friend," she whispered, "say good-bye, and Heaven bless you. Perhaps your prayers may help me in my extremity. I shall think of you always, and, if possible, will write you at short intervals."

The Duchess burst into a passionate flood of tears.

"Oh, my child—my child, this breaks my heart!" but Jean did not weep.

Then Frederick caught her by the wrist, and, with an oath, bade her come away. She obeyed in utter silence, and, half-dragging her through the hall, he placed her in his carriage.

With a faint smile she turned back her sleeve and regarded the bruise he had left upon her tender arm with a sort of pitying contempt.

### CHAPTER VIII.

My lord and lady were staying at Llantyllan, where my lord had a small estate. Their miserable story had reached even that remote Welsh village, and all were ready to commiserate with "my lady."

But she was rarely seen. She neither visited nor received, and it was rumoured in the village that a watch was placed upon all her movements.

As each Sunday came, and she took her seat in the little church, it was noticed that she looked paler, sadder, more weary and hopeless, and many a heart ached for her.

The servants, with the exception of "my lord's" valet—the estimable Greaves—called her an angel.

Stories, too, were afloat that Greatorex treated her with the utmost brutality, and had once been known to strike her.

How she lived through that terrible time Jean could never tell; and even when long years of happiness had half-effaced the memory of it she would shiver and grow pale, if one, by any chance word, should recall its misery and fear.

Day by day her lot grew harder, and she prayed to die; but death came so tardily to those who desire it, and so she lived on. She was so changed that even Maurice might have been pardoned had he passed her in the street with no sign of recognition.

She was so white, so weary; there were dark circles about her eyes, and darker shadows in the violet depths. Even her voice was changed; it had grown faint and weak, and the beautiful lips had a downward curve, telling of sorrow, which then appeared irremediable.

As she sat at table with "my lord" he delighted to insult and degrade her in the presence of the servants; he wrested all authority from her, and strove to goad her on to some mad act.

Once, when he had lifted his hand against her she rose and confronted him, and there was such a look in her eyes that he recoiled in fear.

"If you dare to strike me again," she said, in a fearfully intense tone, "it will be at your own peril. Remember, I am only human, and I have warned you," and without another word she went from the room, leaving him silent through much astonishment.

Spring and summer passed; the autumn came and still she was virtually a prisoner, but not even to her gaoler did she make any protest, or offer any petition, and "my lord" was disappointed.

He had expected tears and cries; he would have rejoiced in them, and it angered him that Jean should rob him of half his diabolical pleasure. He would have sacrificed much to see

that bright head brought low—to make that proud, silent woman grovel at his feet, and pray for mercy.

November came, and on a dreary day a letter reached Jean from the Duchess. It was so long since she had received any news from the outer world that she began to suspect that any addressed to her were abstracted from the post-bag.

Soon that particular morning she stationed herself in the hall, and received the letters and papers from the postman. Greaves had hurried forward, but she motioned him back, and went slowly back to the breakfast-room. There were two or three letters for Greatorex and one paper, the *New York Herald*. He scowled at her as she passed them to him, and asked, "Why the devil—! she interfered with the servants' duties!"

She answered with a curious smile, and breaking the seal of the envelope she held began to read. Her Grace wrote most affectionately, and Jean's weary heart drew fresh courage from the loving words.

She started violently when, with a fearful imprecation, "my lord" rose from the table, dashing the *Herald* to the ground.

He went from the room, slamming the door behind him. Jean stooped, and picking up the paper saw one paragraph was thickly marked in ink. It was the announcement of Valentine Munro's marriage with an old and illiterate millionaire.

"Perhaps," thought the unhappy wife, "this will turn his heart to me!" Then she wondered shudderingly how she should endure Frederick's endearments. Alas! alas! he had made himself hateful to her!

Then she heard the sound of horse's hoofs, and saw Greaves leading Sultan to the hall-door. Frederick came out and sprang into the saddle, afterwards riding away furiously. She availed herself of his absence to reply to her Grace's letter.

It was nearly noon when a servant rushed in, regardless of all ceremony, and informed her that "my lord" had been thrown, and was now lying at the little inn in a dangerous condition.

"My lady" stood silent a moment, her hand pressed hard to her side. She was trying to pray for him, not to rejoice in his well-merited punishment.

Then she went quickly up to her room, and dressed with hasty fingers; the carriage was ordered out, and soon she was driving through the village, followed by the pitying glances of the rustics.

At the inn the surgeon told her that there was little hope for "my lord," that he had sustained fearful injuries.

"Telegraph for a physician," she said, "and tell me how this happened!"

"His lordship set Sultan at a wall; he would not take it, and his lordship was enraged. He beat the animal unmercifully, and at last it made a desperate jump, but did not succeed in clearing the wall, and fell heavily. Assistance was at hand, and his lordship was dragged from under Sultan, who has since been shot, his back being broken."

Still in the same quiet tones "my lady" thanked the surgeon for his information, and went up the narrow staircase, to enter the room where her husband lay, crushed and bruised beyond recognition.

When she saw him thus, so helpless, so wracked with pain, she forgot her wrongs, and all he had made her suffer. She knelt beside him, and took one cold hand in hers.

"Frederick," she whispered, "do you know me?"

His voice came hoarse and laboured.

"Yes. You are Valentine, and you have deceived me!"

"Look again, dear," she entreated. "It is I—Jean—your wife, and I have come to nurse you," and with that she laid her cheek against his hand.

He seemed to struggle a moment with himself, as though he were confused. Then he turned his eyes upon her.

"I know you now; you are the woman I have ill-treated. You have your revenge!"



She saw it was useless to talk with him, and so quietly divested herself of hat and wraps, and sat down beside him.

In the evening Oliver arrived, and Frederick contrived to ask for a lawyer.

"I want to make my will. Of course nearly all goes to you, so you won't grieve much over my death; but—I can't leave her wholly—unprovided for."

After the will was duly drawn up and witnessed by the landlord and ostler, Frederick Greatorex sank rapidly.

All the next day he lay in a stupor, and just as the afternoon darkened, and the lights were brought in, he rallied a moment.

"Jean," he said, distinctly, "are you there? Give me your hand. I shan't trouble you long now. Would you—would you mind kissing me?"

She bent over him and laid her lips to his; he stirred amongst his pillows.

"You're a good woman! I'm sorry for—"

He never finished his sentence; the lamp went suddenly out, "the silver cord was loosed, and the golden bowl broken."

Jean hid her face in the coverlet; the watchers thought she wept, but she was praying that she might not be glad in his death.

The year of mourning passed slowly on; the light and colour had returned to Jean's eyes and face, and her voice had lost its weariness. She had taken up her residence with the Duchess, although Oliver, the young Lord Greatorex, had begged her to make his home here.

He wore his honours with a graceful frankness that drew all hearts to him; and Jean herself treated him with a tenderness that was almost maternal.

One day, the Duchess told her excitedly that Maurice was returning home, adding, "but only for a short time. He has been appointed British Consul at Rome, and enters office next January."

Jean flushed and trembled, remembering his wild declaration of love. She had thought of it many times, and of all his bygone goodness, until her heart, unknown to herself, was full of him.

She passed the next few days in a state of agitation, trying vainly to blind herself to her own gladness.

He came at last, aged and worn, but no longer unhappy, because of the hope he cherished. The meeting was quiet; neither gave any sign of emotion or love, unless, indeed, Jean's added colour and Maurice's passionate eyes told their own tale.

A few weeks passed quietly by, and then Maurice began to prepare for his journey. As yet he had not spoken of love, and Jean's heart failed her with fear that he had forgotten.

One dusky evening, in the pleasant drawing-room, he found her alone. She turned as if to go, but he laid a detaining hand upon her arm.

"Stay, Jean; my time in England is very short. Before I go I must know my fate. Oh, darling!" endearing her then with his arms, "as I loved you when I stoned in telling you, so I love you now, and my love will increase with each succeeding year! I am not eloquent. I cannot woo you with many words, but you are dearer to me than life! What answer will you give me?"

Just a moment, as she trembled in his embrace, the fear of what an ill-natured world would say of their union came over her, and held her silent; but when he stooped and passionately kissed her lips, her whole soul responded to his; love conquered fear, and, with a sudden yielding of herself to him she threw her arms about his neck.

"Maurice! Maurice!" she whispered, tenderly. "Oh, my dear, I love you!"

The wedding was a very quiet one, only Lord Greatorex and the Duchess of Etherington being present.

The bride and bridegroom started at once for

Rome, where Jean's beauty made a great sensation, and the sweet graciousness of her manners soon won her the love of all classes.

Oliver, feeling lonely and restless, started for America, bringing with him (on his return) news of those who had played so cruel a part in Jean's life.

Valentine Dobson, he said, was known as the most daring coquette and extravagant woman in New York. Her illiterate husband was relegated to the servants' apartments, a mere cypher in his own house, and continually cursing the day on which he married the beautiful blonde.

Jenny Baldwin, too, was married, and with her husband kept a gambling hall, and grew fat on the folly of others.

That was the last Jean ever heard of her enemies; and life went on so happily with her that she grew at last to regard the past almost as a dreadful dream.

Children came to bless and brighten her beautiful home, and to perfect her happiness; and in all Italy there is no man more to be envied than he who, first and last, in all purity of soul, had loved her.

[THE END]

## OPALS AND DIAMONDS.

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### CHAPTER XXVIII

"How pale you look, dear. Aren't you well?" asked Sir Lionel that night as they sat at dinner.

"Quite well, thank you," she answered hastily; "it is only the heat."

"It certainly is very hot, still I think that would hardly account for your extraordinary pallor. Let me send for Balmbridge; I should like you to see him."

"No, no," she said again, nervously twisting her lace handkerchief round the slender hands lying on her lap; "It is nothing, really nothing. I simply feel a little languid from the heat. I shall go for a stroll in the park after dinner, that will refresh me."

"Very well, my love. I will accompany you. But, mind, if you don't get your roses back in a day or two I shall insist upon your seeing the doctor."

"Yes."

"Perhaps the smell of the oils and paints may have overcome Lady Molyneux," suggested O'Hara quietly, who sat at the table attired, as usual, in faultless evening dress, looking, to all outward appearances, exactly the same as usual, save for a gleam of repressed passion in his brilliant eyes.

"Perhaps so," agreed the Baronet. "I suppose the smell is not over-pleasant in this hot weather?"

"No, very unpleasant. It would be advisable, I should think, to give up the staidings for a few days, until she recovers somewhat," he continued calmly, for he saw that she was terribly agitated and distressed, and wanted to leave her in peace for a few days, knowing that if she became ill or hysterical that it would probably upset his plans and oblige him to leave the Hall, which was exactly what he did not want to do.

"Yes, I think so. What do you say to it, Maggie?"

"Yes, yes, by all means," she answered, looking at her husband, but never glancing at the face of the other, which seemed to be now so full of menace and triumph.

"Very well then, that is settled. You will have a week's holiday, O'Hara. How will you spend it?"

"Fishing," replied the artist. "You know it is a favourite pastime of mine."

"And of mine also. We will have some rare sport together."

"Yes," echoed Terence, sardonically, "some rare sport."

And then he left the table, and throwing a light coat over his evening suit, he sauntered down through the park to the Dover House, and

looked up at the dusky barrel windows of the old Rest, and smiled to think how he had gained the knowledge of the Molyneux secret, which knowledge gave him such power over the woman who had rejected his dishonourable love with scorn and contempt.

He did not attempt to go in; he knew that, in all probability, Nance would recognise him as the man who had so coolly walked up into the gun-room that autumn day, nearly two years ago, and plied her with her favourite whisky, and learnt from her, while she was muddled with the fiery spirit, all that there was to learn. There was nothing more for him to know. He was aware that the secret had been carefully kept from Lionel Molyneux, and that if it were revealed to him the shock and horror of the revelation would drive him mad, cause him to become an inmate of the quietest house which for several hundreds of years past had been the home of those of his luckless ancestors who had been afflicted with the family malady. The game was in his own hands, and he determined to play it. He had gone away to Russia after his discovery, knowing that his revenge would wait—the blow fall all the more crushingly on his victims, when they had lived and loved a little longer; and now he laughed, as he looked at the time-worn house—a dreadful, mirthless laugh—to think how they lay in the hollow of his hand, and how he could crush them, laying waste their lives, making them barren, desolate, hope-forsaken, unendurable.

Maggie crept to her husband's side as Terence left the room, and kneeling down, laid her aching head on his breast, while the Baronet threw his arm round her and pressed her closely to him; for awhile they remained thus locked in each other's arms, and then he said tenderly, "Poor little woman, you do seem overcome to-night."

"Yes, I feel very tired," she answered, faintly, longing to relieve the agony of her heart by a burst of sobs, and tell him all her troubles.

But she dared not, for his sake she dared not, but must crush down the fears and misgivings, and outraged pride, and appear calm and collected, while every vein throbbled to bursting, and every pulse beat with quickened force as she thought of the insult that had been offered her, and of her powerlessness to resent it, or drive from her home and presence the man who had offered it, and whom she feared so desperately.

"You must brighten up, or I shall have to take you away," continued Sir Lionel, after a pause. "You want the blow of a bit breeze to bring the colour back to your cheeks."

"We—we—couldn't go," she faltered, "with—Mr. O'Hara—here."

"Oh, yes, we could," answered her husband lightly. "We could explain to him the state of the case, and leave him here, in possession, till our return. So if you like to go for a week or ten days I will make our apologies to him, and we will start to-morrow."

"No, thanks," she replied slowly, feeling that she dare not try to escape from the close companionship of the man who was so distasteful to her, though she longed for it as the prisoner in a dark cell longs for the cheery sunlight, the caged bird for freedom, the weary world-worn soul for rest and peace; "It is not necessary."

"Very well, love, just as you please," he said, in his usual good-tempered way. "Will you come out for a little now, or are you too tired?"

"No, I should like a stroll," and getting a shawl she threw it over her bare neck, and leaning on his arm, went out to the garden flooded with silvery moonlight, where the air was heavy with the perfume of the sweet-scented flowers, and balmy as the breeze of southern climes.

The blue heavens were studded with twinkling stars, "each on its golden throne," a night-lingale was singing in the larch spinney, the alder trees waved their thickly-mantled branches, and threw grotesque shadows on the trim sward, and over all was the beauty of the midsummer night.

"Are you better?" asked the Baronet, after a while, when husband and wife had stood for some time listening to the thrilling notes of the songster, and drinking in the loveliness of earth and sky.

"Yes, much better, thanks; I shall be quite myself to-morrow."

But she was not, nor for many morrows. She strove to subdue her feelings, and appeared outwardly calm, yet there was a horrible dread on her, an intangible fear. She felt that something awful was going to happen, though she knew not what, for in her enemy's brilliant evil face she read mischief.

He was scrupulously polite to her before others, though he cast aside the society mask sometimes, when they were alone, and let her see the devilry that lay beneath. And occasionally they were alone, for the sittings were resumed, and she found that it was not possible always to have some one in the studio, and then he would torture her by bitter jibes, and significant innuendoes, and would bend over her while he arranged the draperies and look straight down into her eyes, and she would shiver and tremble, and then remain motionless as a bird fascinated by a snake. She dared not resent his conduct, or appear to notice that some days he had hardly put a single brushful of paint on the canvas, and dawdled over the picture to prolong the sittings which he knew were so many hours of agony to her; for had she not herself told him that he need not hurry over it, or leave the Hall soon, and he had reminded her of it one day, when in her distress she ventured to expostulate with him!

"Why should I hurry! Good work always takes time, and your ladyship was kind enough to say that I might take my own time over it."

"Yes, yes, yet—you have been so long, it—ought to be finished—now."

"Perhaps it ought, yet you see it isn't, and won't be for some time, so you need not trouble yourself on that score. I have another task to accomplish before I go," and he looked at her as he spoke with such an expression in his eyes that she shuddered and quaked, feeling that her punishment for having forsaken him was coming fast and sure, and that there would be no escape for her.

He would strike at her, she knew, through the man who was dearer to her than life itself, and strike secretly, in the dark; she would be powerless to avert the blow, and the anguish of the thought told on her. She grew daily paler, thinner; her once merry voice took a piteous ring, her violet eyes wore a look of terror, like that in the eyes of a hunted stag brought to bay by the cruel hounds, and seeing no escape, the mobile lips drooped; yet O'Hara, as he looked at the beautiful face, so white—so worn—so unutterably sad, felt no pity, no remorse. He loved her with a sort of vile, wild passion, but he loved his revenge more. He had put his hand to the plough; there was no turning back, and he went on—to ruin the peace and happiness of the man who, all unsuspecting, had given him his hand in friendship's clasp, and welcomed him warmly to his home.

Day by day, Sir Lionel grew to like his secret enemy better. The Irishman exerted all his wonderful powers of fascination, brought his strong will to bear on the weaker one of the Baronet, and swayed and influenced him pretty well as he pleased. Hitherto Lionel Molyneux had been an abstemious man, taking only a glass or two of light wine at his dinner, his mother having brought him up to prefer water, as the doctors told her that strong wine would probably affect his reason, and be decidedly bad for him.

Terence knew this, and being a hard drinker himself, he set to work to induce his host to do likewise. Gradually he managed to make him sit longer and longer over his wine after dinner, and take deep libations of heady port and strong, brown sherry, with some glasses of Moselle and champagne, finishing with a *petite verre* of Chartreuse, Aqua d'Oro, or some other liqueur.

The result of this was invariably a violent headache for Molyneux the following morning, which nothing seemed to relieve save perfect quiet in a darkened room, which quiet he was seldom allowed to enjoy by his kind friend, who would rouse him up, and recommend brandy-and-soda, a remedy which aggravated the pains in his head after the first sleep was off.

By degrees the Baronet lost much of the sunny

brightness of his manner. He became nervous, irritable and depressed; and O'Hara, seeing the uncertain light in his eyes, and the trembling of his thin white hands, felt that the time had come for him to play his trump card, and try to overthrow entirely his rival's reason.

"What place is that?" he asked, one day, with well-simulated curiosity, when, after a night of heavy drinking, the two men strolled through the park, to let the fresh air blow on their heated brows.

"The Dowry House," answered his companion, without lifting his eyes from the ground on which they were moodily fixed.

"Oh! Anything in it worth seeing?"

"Very little, I think. It's a ramshackle old place."

"Any pictures?"

"A few."

"I should like to see them. We might go there now."

"Yes, if you like," assented the other indifferently, little knowing he was going to his fate; and together the two men went across the quaint garden, bright with its glory of summer flowers, and the artist seizing the bronze handle, gave a terrific pull, which made the bell clang again, and woke the silent echoes of the place.

"Nobody here!" remarked O'Hara, after another pull, which was unanswered. "We had better try if we can get in at the other door."

They went round there, and, to his joy, the massive door yielded to his touch, and swung back. Old Nance had evidently forgotten to lock it when she had gone on her errand to Wingfield.

"Queer place," he observed, as he entered the panelled drawing-room, and, for appearance's sake, studied the Watteau copies, pretending to be much interested in the costumes of the "Ladies of the old régime," and the "Gay Cavaliers," and the rare miniatures. "Just the right sort of abode for an artist."

"Yes."

"What's up above?" he demanded, as they reached the foot of the time-blackened staircase.

"Lots of rooms. You can go and see."

"You will come too?"

"Yes, if you want me."

"Of course I want you; who else can explain so well all the mysteries of the place?"

"Mysteries!" repeated Sir Lionel. "I didn't know there were any."

"Didn't you, really? Why, I have heard all sorts of strange tales."

"I haven't. But then I must acknowledge that I know next to nothing about the place."

The Baronet spoke wearily. There was a dull pain at his head, and the blood beat in his temples like hammers.

"You ought to improve your acquaintance, then."

"I suppose so."

"Dingy-looking bedrooms," continued O'Hara, passing down the long corridor towards the green baize door.

"Yes," assented the other, absently, following him down the short, dark passage, and through the second door.

"And this is dingy too," and the Irishman, as he spoke, eyed his victim closely, to see the effect the unmistakable aspect of the room would have on him.

"Yes—very. Why—what is it meant for? It looks like a room in a mad-house."

"That is just exactly what it is. Your people are brought here when they go mad."

"When they what?" ejaculated Sir Lionel.

"When they go mad," repeated his companion, coolly.

"But—but—what do you mean?" asked the other, a deadly pallor spreading over his face.

"Why, the Molyneuxs, when they become insane, as they are bound to do in every other generation, instead of being sent to a lunatic asylum are brought here. But, on my honour, I thought you knew, or I would not have spoken of it."

"I know—nothing," said the Baronet, in a

hollow voice, fixing his wild eyes on O'Hara's face. "Tell me."

"No, no; don't think anything about it," he responded, with well-affected concern and regret. "Confusion on my unlucky tongue. I never thought it was a secret kept from you."

"It was. Explain to me."

At first O'Hara pretended to refuse, but at last, yielding to the entreaties of the unfortunate man before him, who was half-frenzied at his refusal, as he meant he should be, he told him all, and more than all, embellishing and adding to the ghastly story, and dwelling on the worst phases of the disease with an unctious manner that would unfailingly have been perceived by any one less distressed than his listener was.

When the recital was finished, the Baronet looked wildly round, and then flung himself on to one of the padded chairs, throwing out his arms, and resting his head on them. Life seemed almost to reel from him in that moment of agony, in view of that frightful fate, that awful doom, from which there was no escape. He was paralyzed—stunned with horror. It had come on him so suddenly, without a word of warning. It seemed to his disordered brain, already inflamed with strong drink, that the clutch of Nemesis was on him, that he was mad—mad! and a groan of utter anguish burst from his white, quivering lips—a groan that was sweet as honey to the man, or rather fiend, who stood watching his victim without a ray of pity on his sardonic face. He didn't attempt to soothe or quiet him; he only stood looking at him with devilish delight, feeling that some of the anguish he had suffered was being atoned for.

"What devil's work is this?" cried a harsh voice suddenly, behind him, and, turning, he saw Nance, with her penthouse of coarse straw covering her scanty grey locks, her deep-set eyes flaming angrily. "What be ye doin' here, mon!"

"Looking over the place, my good woman," he replied, coolly.

"Was't ye ha brist to maister here, to spier accot'!"

"I certainly accompanied your master here."

"An' ye ha tellt him what ye ken!"

"Told him what! I don't understand you."

"Yes, ye do, mon. Ye ken weel what I mean, and I ken ye are te paintin' laddie that came lang syne to make me faithless to my trust, and fash me."

"You talk nonsense, dame."

"Na, na. I ken ye, the my head wharled frae te drap in my e's ye ha' glen me. I'd ken ye onywhere, and I'll tell my lady aboot ye and ye laigh speirin' ways."

"Shouldn't advise ye to," said O'Hara with the utmost *sang froid*, knowing he had her under his thumb.

"Why? I dinna doot ye wad like it better if I hand my tongue."

"I decidedly think it would be better for you."

"Why, mon. Canna ye say why?"

"Because, if you say a single word of my ever having been here to any living soul I shall be under the painful necessity of telling Lady Molyneux that you are not to be trusted, that you are a little—just a little—too fond of whisky, that you would drink with any stranger who offered you drink, and that you are frequently intoxicated."

"It's false," snapped the old crone, her eyes blazing fiercely; "it's a blithering, chockin' lie."

"I can prove that it is not, and if you are insolent shall certainly suggest that a more trustworthy person be found as Custodian of the Rest. And now go and fetch me some water, and be quick about it."

"Yes, 'tis time ye lunkit to t' pulr lad chitterin' there. Dotted-like. He'll never mair be th' same after this day's wasin' work. Never be sae bonnie," and muttering and wagging her head in her usual ghastly fashion she hurried off, returning soon with a pitcher of icy water and a delf mug, which she placed on the table.

"Molyneux rouse yourself," said O'Hara, laying his hand on his shoulder. "Look up, man. Don't give way like this."

His voice was hearty and encouraging; he



could afford to be genial now—now that the damage was irretrievably done, and he spared no efforts to try and rouse his companion from the torpor into which he had fallen. After a time the Baronet raised his head and looked about in a dazed kind of way.

"Where am I? What has happened?" he asked, pressing his hands to his hot brow. "Ah! I remember," he added, with a shudder, looking round the room. "Oh! Heaven, how shall I bear my fate?"

"Don't think about it," advised Terence, coolly.

"Don't think about it? How can I help thinking about it? The dread of it will be on me night and day. I shall never have a moment's peace till I lose my reason—become insane—till my brain is steeped in a darkness worse than death," and he covered his aching face with his hands and groaned aloud.

"You are looking at the worst side of the affair. Probably you will be all right if you don't brood over it and give way to melancholy fancies."

"That is just it. I shall not be able to keep from brooding over it."

"Well, you must try not to, if it is only for the sake of your wife and child," counselled the hypocrite.

"Ah, yes. Poor Maggie, poor Maggie. It will be a terrible blow for her when she knows."

"But she must not know," said the other, quickly. "Surely you would not disturb her peace of mind by telling her such a thing as this!"

"No; not if she doesn't know it already."

"Of course she doesn't know it. How could she?" demanded O'Hara, telling the untruth boldly to gain his own end.

"I don't know. I can't think. Everything seems to be chaotic in my brain," replied Sir Lionel, wearily, as he struggled to his feet, and prepared to leave the place which most likely was fated to be his home in the future.

"Naturally it would be just now. But take my advice and let no one guess that you have learnt the family secret, least of all your wife."

And then, as they went slowly back through the park and woodland to the Hall, the Judas, on whose arm the unfortunate young Baronet leant, exerted all his powers of persuasion, and induced him at last to promise to keep silent; and so the dread secret that he had discovered was locked away in his breast, and he brooded over it silently, uttering not a word about it to any living soul.

## CHAPTER XXIX.

### A CRUCIFIED HEART.

MAGGIE never knew of the visit her husband had paid to the Dower House. Dame Twerton's tongue was tied by fear of dismissal. O'Hara kept his own counsel, so there was no one to tell her; but from that time she noticed with many a sharp pang at heart that her husband was an altered man.

He was gloomy and silent, never smiled or laughed, avoided rather than sought her society and that of their child, muttered and talked to himself in a queer way; and in his eyes was a brooding care, a dark shadow, a mysterious look that she could not fathom or understand, but which made her uneasy, and full of dread. A fear was growing on her daily, an awful fear, which she dared not put into words, but which made her life a torture.

"Where, when the gods are cruel,  
Do they go for torture? Where  
Plant thorns, set pain like a jewel?  
Ah, not in the flesh, not there."

The racks of earth and the rods  
Are weak as foam on the sands.  
In the heart is prey for the gods,  
Who crucify hearts, not hands."

She felt she was "pray for the gods." She would gladly have borne any physical pain; but this mental anguish—that was unbearable—simply unbearable.

How long would she be able to bear it? she

wondered daily, this torment—this apprehension lest her husband should become insane. She was haunted day and night by the fear. "Cark-ing care" drove the light from her eye, the bloom from her cheek. She was listless, languid, and knew not what to do for the best. Once she suggested to Lionel the advisability of their asking Eunice to come over and stay with them, or of going themselves to France; but he had negatived it in such a furious manner, and with so much excitement, that she did not dare to speak of it again, and waited, wearing out brain and mind, for the end which she feared was not far off.

It was quite a relief to her when nutty autumn arrived, bringing with it Henrico Clifford, who came for a shot at the pheasants.

For a while his bright young face and pleasant manners brought a ray of sunshine to the Hall, and Maggie felt happier and less deserted and isolated than she had of late; but O'Hara, who was jealous, with a savage bitter jealousy of the handsome Italian, saw his way to planting yet another thorn in the heart of the man he hated, with the whole intensity of his ferid nature, and began to whisper hideous lies into the Baronet's ears about the friendship which existed between Henrico and his beautiful hostess.

Had Lionel Molyneux been in his right mind he would have scouted the mere notion of Maggie caring for any man save himself, but he was not, and his reason, already tottering on its throne, was overturned by the insidious whispers of the Judas to whom he listened.

"I go now," said O'Hara, "and leave you alone to guard your fame and honour. I have warned you, so be watchful. Don't leave them alone. Who knows, that child may not be yours."

"Look!" he continued, pointing at the terrace, up and down which young Clinton and Maggie were strolling, talking earnestly, for he was telling her that ere the year was over he would be able to bring his bride to England, through the liberality of his brother, who had made him a larger allowance. "Look, they appear to like each other's society marvellously well. If I were in your place I should turn her lover out of the house."

"No, no," cried the wretched maniac, "not her lover—not her lover."

"Yes, her lover," repeated Terence with emphasis, as he strode down the steps and got into the dog-cart which was to take him to Incheffeld station en route for the continent. "Don't deceive yourself with vain hopes. It is as I say."

"Given him something to think about now," he reflected as he drove off.

And he had indeed.

With a restless glitter in his eyes Lionel Molyneux watched the couple pacing up and down the moss-grown terrace, while O'Hara, feeling that he had done his work, drove on exulting. He had nothing to stay for longer; Maggie was not ready or willing then, whatever she might be in the future when tried by sorrow and loneliness, to fly with him; the latent doom of his race was on the unhappy Baronet. He had gained his desire, and why should he stay longer at the Hall, which is anything but a merry place now that dull care had spread its wings above it, especially when boon companions and fair women awaited him in Paris, ready to welcome him with open arms, and in whose reckless, dissipated society he might forget, for a time at least, how base and degraded he had become, drown in the wine-cup that longing for the impossible, that bitter regret for what might have been?

Maggie, quite unconscious of the fierce eyes that watched her, went on chatting with Henrico, listening to his plans for the future, entering into all his hopes and fears, making suggestions, giving advice, shaking off for a few brief moments the deadly fear that oppressed her.

"O'Hara has made a long stay," remarked Clinton, as he saw the dog cart go down the avenue.

"Yes, very long."

"Is your portrait finished?"

"Yes, and thank Heaven it is," she added to herself.

"And Jack's? but I have seen that, and know

it is. How wonderfully like your son and heir it is! One could almost imagine it was the child himself sitting on the cushions looking at you with his grave eyes."

"Yes, Mr. O'Hara is wonderfully clever."

"Yet a slow painter, is he not?"

"I think so. He was a long time over my portrait. I am glad it is finished," and she heaved a sigh of relief.

"Yes, I should think so. Doing model is not a pleasant occupation."

"Very unpleasant," rejoined Maggie, with emphasis, thinking of those dreadful hours she had spent face to face with her enemy, and feeling a load lifted off her heart as the dog-cart disappeared in the distance bearing him away, and a sense of joy permeated her being.

Her joy, however, was not of long duration. An hour later she took little Jack to say good-night to his father, as he always did before they went to dinner. She found him sitting in the library, with his head resting on his hands, still wearing his grey tweed suit.

"Li, dear," she said, gently, for somehow or other she had grown to fear him a little of late, "the first bell has rung. You won't be in time for dinner if you don't go and dress now."

"Dinner," he repeated, mechanically, lifting his head and glaring at her with a terrible expression on his haggard face. "What dinner?"

"Our dinner, love," she said, still more gently, crushing down the sense of uneasiness she experienced as she looked at him, but determining to send for Mr. Bainbridge on the morrow and consult him about her husband, as the peculiarity of his manner was striking.

"Why do you call me love?" he demanded, with a suppressed ferocity.

"Because you are dear to me," she answered, pressing little Jack convulsively against her breast in her agitation.

"Not as dear as others—not what another is to you," he rejoined, savagely, keeping his eyes on her face.

"Dearer than anyone else, Li," she said, with a sob, for her terror was mastering her, and she was fascinated by the awful expression of the handsome face before her.

"You lie!" he shouted, furiously, rising to his feet and shaking his hands in the air. "You lie, infamous woman!"

"Darling, hush, be calm!" she expostulated, trembling from head to foot. "You are all the world to me, you—"

"You lie!" he repeated. "Go tell that to the man you care for—to the man who has perilled his soul for the love of you."

"I care for no one but you, husband. Indeed—indeed I don't."

"Madame, you are mistaken," he said, with sudden change of manner, and an elaborate politeness. "I drink confusion to your lover, the man who has robbed me of you," and seizing the decanter he poured out a full tumbler of brandy, and tossed it off before she could prevent him. "Why do you bring that thing here? that gloom, that imp from the lower regions?" he demanded, looking at the child she held in her arms.

"I—brought—our boy—to say good night," she faltered.

"Our boy! Ha! ha! that is fine. Our boy! He is none of mine. Go, take him to his rightful father to be cared."

"Lionel, what do you mean?" she gasped, a sickening fear creeping over her, for she knew that the man before her, with the wild, lurid glare in his dark eyes, was for the time a dangerous lunatic.

"Mean, madame? Is my meaning so obscure that you do not understand? Take it away or I'll kill it—I'll kill it!" he went on, with another shout.

"How hot it is!" he continued, a minute later, dragging at his collar, "I am suffocating."

"Come to our room, Li," suggested Maggie, half-paralysed with terror, "you will be cooler there."

He made a step towards the door, and she hoped he was going into the hall, where she knew the men-servants would be at that time to help her, but she was mistaken.

With a cunning smile he drew back, whispering,—

"No, no. Not there, not there. To the river! To the river! There I shall be cool," and dashing past her as she tried to bar his way he flung open the window and sprang out on the terrace.

(To be continued.)

THIS STORY COMMENCED IN NO. 1855. BACK NUMBERS CAN STILL BE HAD.

A SHARK'S egg is one of the oddest-looking things imaginable. It is unprovided with shell; but the contents are protected by a thick, leathery covering, almost as elastic as india-rubber. The average size is two inches by two and three-quarter inches, and the colour is almost pure black.

AMONG the Boers there is a custom of having in the house a coffin, together with a supply of "dead" clothes. The coffin often represents a lot of money, as it is usually the most elaborate and substantial procurable. Although ostensibly the special property of the head of the house, it is really there in order that any one of the family may be decently buried, should he or she die suddenly, or far away from where a coffin would be procurable. Even if a poor neighbour die and be unprovided for in this respect, he can always rely on the kindly offer of some friend's "dead-kist." The coffin is kept wherever it is convenient in the house, and many are the stories told of unsuspecting travellers coming across such gruesome articles while sojourning at some farmhouse.

PROBABLY the best fire extinguishing liquid is aqua-ammonia, without any addition whatever. In one instance, where fire had originated, probably from spontaneous combustion in a pile containing several tons of cotton-seed, and the interior of which was almost a solid body of live coal, a half-gallon of ammonia completely smothered the fire. In another, which occurred at Savanay, France, the vapours of a tank containing fifty gallons of gasoline caught fire in the linen room of a laundry. The room was instantly a mass of living flames, but a gallon and a half of ammonia water thrown into it completely, and almost immediately, extinguished the fire. The ammonia was in a glass demijohn in an apothecary's shop next door to the laundry, and was thrown into the room by the druggist as an experiment. So completely was the fire extinguished, that workmen were enabled to enter the room almost immediately, where they found the iron tank of gasoline intact.

GAS logs are made now-a-days in various sizes and with the imitation hickory logs of which they are formed, piled in various shapes. The gas log is designed as a slightly and convenient means of giving out heat. There is an imitation electric grate fire that is intended for ornamental purposes only. This fire is composed of pieces of ruby and amber glass. The grate, standing in a fireplace in the usual manner, has within it an incandescent light, over which is placed a wire cage at such a height in the grate that the coal—that is the ruby and amber glass—when spread over it is brought up to the height of an ordinary coal fire. The cage protects the burner, makes a thin layer of glass sufficient and holds the glass up so that the light from below can shine through it all and give it the appearance of the coal fire it is made to represent. The light is turned on and off, and the fire thus lighted or put out by turning a key in the usual manner, this key being located conveniently by the side of the fireplace. The electric grate is used usually in rooms where steam is used for heating.

AN ORIENTAL SCENE.—The approach to Ceylon is really the greatest charm that accompanies a visit to the island. It is probable that the steamer will pass through a monsoon before reaching Colombo, the chief port of entry, unless the traveller goes by way of the Red Sea, and then the heat of this water of Biblical renown is just as terrifying and twice as disagreeable. The monsoons of the Indian Ocean come and go inside

of ten hours. The heat of the Red Sea is eternal. But coming out of a monsoon, after the steamer has been tossed and twisted and its decks swept from stem to stern with the angry seas, after the timid women have finished crying, and the sceptical finished praying, and the purser bravely tells how he passed through one ten times as bad, the shores of Ceylon look like the realization of a fond hope. There is a long stretch of silvery beach, surmounted with the seemingly impenetrable groves of citron and cinnamon, coconuts and palms, and in their midst Colombo appears like a fairy city, with myriad spires of Oriental design, studded with gilded balls glittering in the sun.

It used to be believed that the tsetse-fly disease, that plague of African travel, was due to a poison natural to the tsetse-fly, as the acrid secretions of ants or hornets are natural to those insects. A group of bacteriologists have been investigating the disease, and it is now known that the tsetse-fly is the mere bearer of the disease. The fly itself is the prey of a minute organism, and when it sucks the blood of an ox, some of those parasites enter the wound and multiply incredibly in the blood vessels. Specimens of the blood of affected animals have been shown under high magnification, and the tiny, eel-like parasites, not larger than blood-corpuscles are seen in countless numbers. Under another microscope a drop of fresh blood was shown with the parasites actually alive and wriggling in disgusting activity. For comparison there was shown, alive and dead, similar parasites infesting the blood of sewer rats in this country. Unfortunately these parasites appear not to affect the health of the rats. The exhibition was a striking demonstration of the modern knowledge of diseases; most of these are now seen to be phases of the struggle for existence between small organisms like microbes and large organisms like man and the other vertebrates. And the victory is not always with the strong.

MANY of the villages on the Upper Congo consist merely of fifty to sixty log huts, two-thirds of the population being generally women. In many districts women are considered as currency, their value increasing as they attain a greater degree of competency. Each woman has as many metal ornaments as she can wear, some composed of iron, others brass and copper. These metals are the money of the country, so that the more a woman can heap upon herself the greater becomes her value. Each chief has as many wives as he can afford to buy or marry, which is only another form of purchase. Early in the morning few of these women are to be found in the villages, as they start off at daybreak to work in their plantations, and do not return until about noon. However, a few always have to remain to attend to the necessary domestic items of life, such as cooking and their toilet. These central Africans are very particular in all items in connection with their toilet, which consists of plaiting their hair, shaving off the eyebrows, pulling out the eyelashes, cutting their nails right down to the quick, and besmearing their bodies with a mixture of palm-oil and camwood. A busy nook in a village is always the blacksmith's shop, generally merely a grass roof supported on bare poles. Like the corresponding institution of civilized life, it is the resort of local gossipers.



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and does the necessary work in a house for a family, finds it very weary work. Thousands of women whose husbands are only in moderate circumstances have to bear this hardship uncomplainingly. When a woman has health and strength she can do this—but when, as is often the case, she is suffering from nervousness, debility, general weakness and ill-health, it makes life a burden. If such women would only wear the Electropathic Belt what a difference there would be, nerve troubles, weakness, that tired and languid feeling, headache, loss of appetite, and ill-health would soon be a thing of the past. If you are a sufferer, grasp the opportunity to rid yourself of this state of affairs and get perfect health. Thousands of suffering women have been cured—you can read their letters if you call, or write for copies and advice on your case, free, to

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# FACTETIE.

AUCTIONEER'S motto: Come when you are bid, and bid when you come.

"Do you know that you talk in your sleep, Henry?" asked Mrs. Peck. "Well, do you begrudge me those few words also?" he snapped back.

"My son," said his father solemnly, "when you see a boy always loafing about the street corners, what place in life do you suppose he is fitting himself for?" "To be a policeman."

HUSBAND: "I don't see how you can kiss that dog." Wife: "Huh! I don't see how dear little Fido can stand it to kiss me when he knows I've just been kissed by a horrid man."

FRANK (unmarried): "Do you think a man has a right to open his wife's letters?" Robert (married): "Well, he might have the right, but I don't see how he could have the courage."

UNCLE inquired of little Bobby if he had been a good little boy. Bobby: "No, I haven't." Uncle: "Why, I hope you haven't been very bad." Bobby: "Oh, no; just comfortable."

"What's the matter, old man?" "Oh, I've just had a quarrel with my wife." "Well, forget and forgive." "I can never forgive her. You see, I was in the wrong." "Then, in that case, demand an apology."

AN Irishman being asked at a recent trial for a certificate of his marriage, bared his head and exhibited a huge scar, which looked as though it might have been made with a fire-shovel. The evidence was deemed satisfactory.

LITTLE TERROR: "Mamma, Mr. Meeks' skin is as smooth as papa's. No marks on it at all." Mamma: "Just hear the child, Mr. Meeks. Of course there are no marks on it, my pet." Little Terror: "But you said the hens had been pecking him."

MOTHER: "What grieves you, Willie?" Willie: "I asked pa if he could spell hippopotamus." Mother: "And what did he do?" Willie (sobbing): "He thought hard a minute an' then got furious, an' said he'd spank me if I bothered him again when he was readin'."

"YAS, Miss Cutting," remarked Cholly: "I believe in—aw—straightforward speech. It's my custom, dencher know, to always speak my mind." "That's it, is it?" put in the young lady; "I often wondered why you had so little to say."

BELLA: "So you're engaged to Mr. Groosum. How on earth did he ever propose?" Stella: "Well, he took me for a walk in the cemetery, and when we came to their family vault he asked me how I'd like to be buried there some day with his name engraved on a stone above me."

WEARY WALKER: "Lady, would yer please give me a few bleenits like dose I got last week!" Mrs. Newed: "Yes, poor fellow. Here are three of them for you." Weary Walker: "Can't yer make it four, mum? Me and me partner wants to play quoits."

HUSBAND (ill at home): "Did you post that letter I gave you?" Wife (back from hurried shopping tour): "N-o; I forgot it until the last minute." "It was very important." "Oh, it's all right! I gave it to a little boy who promised to give it to another little boy whose half-uncle lives next door to a postman."

CHAIRMAN (at a concert): "Ladies and gentlemen, Miss Discordant will now sing 'Only Once More.'" Sarcastic Critic: "Thank Heaven for that!" Chairman (coming forward again): "Ladies and gentlemen, instead of singing 'Only Once More,' Miss Discordant will sing 'For Ever and Ever.'" Collapse of S. C.

SCENE: Little Willie, sitting down to tea with his grandmother, who is just about to cut the cake. Willie (bastily): "Grannie, before you cut my piece of cake, I want to ask you a question!" Grannie: "Well, dear, what is it?" Willie: "I want to know if your 'spectacles magnify?" Grannie: "Yes, a little, dear." Willie: "Well, then, will you please take them off while you cut my cake?"

SAXON TOURIST (at Irish railway station): "What time does the half-past eleven train start, Paddy?" Porter: "At thinty minutes to twilve, sharrup, sor." Tourist retires discomfited.

On the death of an old gentleman in a certain town recently, the order for his coffin was given to a stranger. The man who had always done work for the deceased gentleman's family was asked how it was that he was not making the coffin. "Ah!" said he, "things are different now; but you may depend upon't, if the old gent had been alive I should have got the order."

MOTHER (to Bobbie, in disgrace, returning from interview with father): "My poor boy! Did it—hurt very much?" Bobbie: "Please, mummy, if you don't mind, we won't talk about it!"

A DUTCHMAN at the Cape some time back went out to his milkman in the street with a jug in each hand, instead of one as usual. The dispenser of attenuated milk asked if he wished him to fill both vessels. The Dutchman replied, suiting the action to the word: "Dis for de milluk, and dis for de watter, an' I will mix 'em so as to shute myself."

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## SOCIETY.

KING OSCAR OF SWEDEN in his young days was regarded as the most accomplished tenor in Europe, and could have made a fortune out of his voice on the stage.

PRINCE ALEXANDER OF BATTENBERG is going shortly to Eton, unless he decides for a naval career, in which case he will join the training-ship *Britannia* at Dartmouth about a year hence.

THE Queen cannot communicate with her subjects as can the most menial of her servants, nor can she receive presents from her people save through officers of State, or friends personally known to Her Majesty.

THE Prince of Wales is to pay a visit in the autumn (probably during the first week of October) to Sir Archibald and Lady Edmonstone at Duntreath Castle, their picturesque old seat in Strathgairn.

THE Queen is to pay a semi-State visit to Bristol during the last week of November, after the return of the Court to Windsor from Balmoral, for the purpose of formally opening a convalescent home which has been built on the borders of Durham Downs as a memorial of the Diamond Jubilee.

THE Queen has invited the Emperor of Germany to spend a few days with her at Windsor during the last fortnight of November, but the exact date of his Majesty's visit to England (which is to be as private as possible) is not yet fixed.

It is understood that, although Claremont will shortly be shut up for some months, the Duchess may come back in the spring and spend next season in England. Moreover, after the Duke has passed through the necessary curriculum in Germany and entered the German army, it is probable that the Duchess will once more take up her abode almost permanently in this country.

A VERY fine collection of stamps gives many hours of delight to Princess Charles of Denmark, its Royal owner. The albums containing them are most carefully and beautifully arranged, the immense variety of specimens being intermingled with pretty decorative borders and paintings in water-colours from the capable brush of the Princess. From the multiplicity of the designs and the care with which the stamps have been arranged, it is evident that her Royal Highness has devoted a considerable amount of time, interest, and genius to her favourite and scientific hobby. Her Highness's collection should prove of more value to her than its mere philatelic worth, on account of the charming combination of her artistic productions with the extensive variety of interest, in stamp-collecting itself.

THE Queen does not visit shops in person, as do many of the Princess and Princesses. She has her commands written and sent to the various establishments she patronises, and the proprietors of these despatch special messengers with the goods she desires to see. These messengers, as a rule, wait while she inspects the things, but sometimes goods are left for a time to await inspection by Her Majesty. The couriers of various Royal personages from Her Majesty downwards, are to be seen daily in the West End executing commissions, and giving orders for goods to be submitted on approval for their Royal employers. As a rule it is the custom of shopkeepers to despatch the articles required by some trustworthy member of the firm. Her Majesty is somewhat fastidious as to orders she gives for personal requisites. It is a well-known fact that should they show these articles or allow any description of them to appear in the press, Her Majesty would at once deprive them of her custom.

THE Queen is the owner of a great quantity of almost priceless gold plate, the accumulated treasure of successive reigns. This plate is stored at Windsor Castle, and is brought to London for use at Court entertainments, such as concerts and balls at Buckingham Palace. On these occasions it appears on the walls and tables of the supper-room, the dishes, stands, flagons, and shields making a goodly show.

## STATISTICS.

THE daily average of immigrants into the United States is 2,000.

THE output of gold in 1900 is expected to equal the combined production of gold and silver in 1896.

THE bones of an average man's skeleton weigh 20 lbs. Those of a woman are probably 6 lbs. lighter.

AN estimation has been made of the money lost on the Turf throughout the world during each year. The amount is placed at £50,000,000, of which £10,000,000 is lost on English race-courses, and, strange to say, about £20,000,000 on Australian courses. The remainder is chiefly distributed between France, the United States, and British Colonies.

## GEMS.

It is easier for a philosopher to stand tribulations than vexations.

NECESSITY may render a doubtful act innocent, but it cannot make it praiseworthy.

THERE are two ways of attaining an important end—force and perseverance. Force fails to the lot only of the privileged few, but austere and sustained perseverance can be practised by the most insignificant. Its silent power grows irresistible with time.

To be alone in one's appreciation of beauty is like striking chords only in the bass or treble. To perceive such things in harmony with another, is to be in touch with the very principle of nature. It is the face of man answering to the face of man in the waters of the spirit.

## HOUSEHOLD TREASURES.

ICE CREAM.—Take four breakfast cups of milk, two tablespoonful cornflour, half-pound sugar, one teaspoonful essence of vanilla; heat the milk and add to it the cornflour wet with a little cold milk; let it boil, then stir in the sugar and the vanilla, and set it aside to get quite cold, then freeze it; any other flavour may be added instead of vanilla: lemon or strawberry, or a tablespoonful of chocolate may be boiled with the cornflour, and is good for a change; the cream may be made with skim milk, and an egg put in well beaten up, after it has boiled; that makes it a little yellow.

BOHEMIAN CAKE.—One and a quarter pound butter, one and a-half pound castor sugar, two ounces grated chocolate, juice and finely chopped peel of a lemon, six ounces fine flour, three raw yolks of eggs, quarter-pound finely chopped mixed peel, half-ounce baking powder, and the stiffly-whipped whites of the eggs. Work the butter till creamy, then add the above ingredients in the order given, mixing well together, and the whites of the eggs at the very last. Then put the mixture into a well-buttered cake-tin that is lined with a buttered paper, and bake in a moderate oven for forty to sixty minutes, then turn out and leave it to get cold.

FRIED MUSHROOMS.—Ingredients: Mushrooms, Slices of bread. A piece of butter or dripping the size of a hen's egg. Cut the crust off the slices of bread, then cut them into neat shapes. Cut the stalks off the mushrooms, and peel off the top skin. Melt the butter or dripping in a clean frying-pan. When thoroughly hot put in the mushrooms. Fry first on one side and then on the other, till they are quite soft. Then lift them out and keep them hot. If you have not enough dripping in your pan in which to fry the bread, heat a little more, then put in the bread and fry a pretty golden-brown. Arrange the fried bread on a hot dish, and place the mushrooms neatly on top.

## MISCELLANEOUS.

WHAT are known as "tidal waves" have nothing to do with the tides, but are supposed to be caused by earthquakes.

THERE are three varieties of the dog that never bark—the Australian dog, the Egyptian shepherd dog, and the "Hon-headed" dog of Thibet.

THE man-of-war of the ancient Romans had a crew of about 225 men, of which 174 were oarsmen working on three decks. The speed of these vessels was about six knots an hour in fair weather.

THE Arctic fox shows the greatest change of any animal in the colour of its coat throughout the year. In summer its coat is dark blue, and it gradually lightens until snow begins to fall, by which time it is pure white.

A BEELE-BULLETT may be fired through a pane of glass, making a hole the size of the ball without cracking the glass. If the glass be suspended by a thread it will make no difference, and the thread will not even vibrate.

THE latest life-boat which has been approved by the British Admiralty carries three long cylinders, into which 1,000,000 cubic feet of air can be compressed. This air will drive the boat fifteen miles an hour for six hours.

THE most deadly poison is that found in an African plant. As little as a one-thousand-millionth part of an ounce of it produces a distinctly injurious effect upon the heart, and only twice that quantity kills.

THE speed of an otter under water is amazing. Fish have no chance against them. In some places in India otters are kept by the natives to fish for them. They are tied up to stakes like dogs, when not working, wear plaited straw collars, and seem happy.

THE speed of swimmers is increased by a new appliance, having an ankle-plate strapped to the foot to carry a webbing stretched on ribs, which opens and shuts alternately as the wearer's feet are moved through the water, the webbing increasing the resistance of the water.

THE French industry of icing milk is an original departure in tinned commodities. The milk is frozen and placed in block form in tins, and, on the part of the purchaser, requires to be melted previous to use. Being hermetically sealed, the commodity thus iced preserves its form until it is required, when a minute's exposure to the gun's rays or to the heat of the fire is all that is necessary to reduce it to a liquid condition.

THE discoveries of extensive gold-bearing territories within the Arctic circle have inspired inventions for overcoming the serious obstacles of eternally frozen earth to the processes of mining. A recently patented apparatus consists of a steam generator, a metallic hood, a coil of steam pipe within the hood and connected to the generator, a revolving rake at the bottom of the hood and a pump having a suction pipe communicating with the lower part of the hood. In operation the hood is placed over the frozen pay earth, steam is turned on, and the rake set in operation to stir and disintegrate the thawed soil. At intervals the pump is used to pump out the mud and gravel.

THERE are various kinds of tea which are not fraudulent manufactures, though they are not made of the real leaf. In Mauritius they make tea of the leaves of an orchid. In Peru they drink mate, a tea made from a native species of holly. The Abyssinians make a tea from the leaves of the *Catha edulis*, which has such stimulating qualities that even a leaf or two of it chewed has all the reviving effects of "the cup that cheers," and thus is most valuable to travellers. The Tasmanians are said to be the happy possessors of no less than one hundred substitutes for tea, while the Tonkinese have teas of their own made of berries, leaves, woods and bark of trees. In Sumatra coffee leaves are infused in the teapot, and the result is said to be an excellent beverage.



## NOTICES TO CORRESPONDENTS.

**WORRIED.**—You can do nothing except leave.

**A. S.**—The legal life of a Parliament is seven years.

**S. B.**—The marriage in either name would be legal.

**CONSTANT READER.**—Commitments are for calendar months.

**H. B.**—It is made of the green "covers" or skins of the walnut.

**A. B.**—A husband is not liable for debts contracted by his wife before her marriage to him.

**REGULAR READER.**—It is quite reasonable to ask tenants to sign before taking possession.

**D. B.**—Every man has a right to leave property which is his absolutely to anyone he wishes.

**ONE WHO WANTS TO KNOW.**—A married daughter is not legally liable for the support of her parents.

**RALPH.**—Write to the Agent-General for New South Wales, Victoria-street, S.W., for information as to best course of procedure.

**G. O.**—A mutual agreement to separate does not annul a marriage; nor does it give to such parties the liberty of marrying again without first obtaining a legal divorce.

**HENRY.**—According to your own showing the young man is unworthy of you. Your father may seem harsh, but he is evidently more mindful of your future happiness than you appear to be.

**S. L.**—A male of fourteen years and female of twelve can marry in Scotland without their parents' consent; in England the parents' consent is necessary, but the marriage stands although it may not have been given; the bridegroom, however, could be punished.

**H. H.**—Banns of marriage must be published on three following Sundays, and the parties must during that time reside in the parish or parishes wherein the banns are published. The marriage must take place in one of the churches where the banns were published.

**DOLLY.**—Use beeswax and turpentine, which is excellent. Melt half an ounce of wax in half a pint of turpentine in a cool oven, and use cold. It must be rubbed on with a soft cloth, and the enamel then polished with dry dusters, finishing off with a chamoin.

**A. L.**—Take as much water as you wish, and make it acid either with lemon or tartaric or any other acid. It should be quite sour. Sweeten it with a little sugar, and flavour it to taste. To a tumbler of this add quarter teaspoonful of carbonate of soda, and your fizzy drink is made.

**DIAMOND.**—The simplest method to get rid of blackheads is by placing a watch-key over the worm and pressing gently, when it will come out in the barrel of the key; or by a gentle pressure beneath the nails of the opposite fingers, followed by the use of warm water and soap.

**ANXIOUS.**—A marriage is legal, even though one of the parties to the marriage gives an assumed name, but it causes trouble in proving the marriage in a court of law if ever necessary. It is a great mistake to use an assumed name in any affair, and especially in so serious a matter as a marriage ceremony.

**K. L.**—These may be removed by covering with a paste made of fullers'-earth and spirits of turpentine. Let the paste remain on till thoroughly dry, and then brush off. If the spots are very bad, they may need to be slightly rubbed with the paste, not too hard, or the fuller's earth will be difficult to get out.

**C. N.**—There is no part of the world which has such a black record for wrecks as the narrow Black Sea. The number in some years has averaged more than one a day, the greatest number of wrecks recorded in one year being 425, and the smallest 124. About 50 per cent. of these vessels became total wrecks, all the crews being lost.

**LOVER OF THE "LONDON READER."**—Half an ounce of gelatine, one teaspoonful extract of meat, Arnica's is good, one teaspoonful of water: soak the gelatine in the water and then dissolve it, add the meat extract and boil a few minutes, stirring all the time; stock may be used instead of water and less "extract" used; this is laid thickly on the joint, and soon gets firm.

**LOM.**—The duties of nursery governess vary so much with the social position of the employers that we cannot give any general statement which would apply to all cases; but we think you may understand that at most you would not be required to do more in the way of teaching than superintending the lessons of the very young children at night, in order to prepare them for school next day.

**O. K.**—Devil's Island, where Captain Dreyfus, the French officer, was confined, is a hot and barren strip of sand and rocks on the coast of French Guiana, between the mouths of the Orinoco and the Amazon. It is too small to appear on ordinary maps. It is quite exceptional for any but the most desperate convicts to be confined on the wretched islands along the coast of French Guiana.

**AGNES.**—One of the simplest methods of removing them is to place the stained part over a bowl and pour boiling water through till the stain disappears. The only difficulty about this treatment is that it must be done soon after the stain is made. Stains that have dried may be removed by soaking in whisky or oxalic acid. The material must be thoroughly rinsed afterwards.

**M. V.**—A gravedigger must first upon a registrar's certificate of the death before agreeing to break ground for the interment; he may refuse to bury the body if the certificate is not forthcoming; and in event of nuisance thereupon being caused it would be the duty of the police to take the case in hand, beginning with a strict inquiry into the whole circumstances of the death.

**HAROLD.**—Cleopatra's Needle is 68 feet 5½ inches high, its breadth at the widest part being 7 foot 5 inches on two of its sides, and 7 foot 10½ inches on the opposite sides. From the widest part near the base it narrows as it ascends to a breadth of 4 foot or five foot, and then contracts to a tapering pyramid 7 foot 6 inches in height, called the pyramidion. Its weight is 180 tons, and its cubic measurement 2,520 feet.

**FRADA.**—We certainly think you have acted in the wisest and most prudent way possible, and your friends are very injudicious to urge you to reconsider your decision. It is quite clear that such a marriage could only bring you unhappiness, as it is not likely the young man would keep a promise to his wife which he had failed to fulfil to his sweetheart. Do not let yourself be talked over by anyone, or we feel sure you will live to regret it.

**MAX.**—It is something of an experiment. You must remember that a woman ages much more rapidly than a man, and that when the husband is still young the wife will appear to be well along in middle life. In spite of this, such a marriage might be a successful one. If the young man knows your age and still wishes to marry you, we see no good reason why you should not consent; but you should ponder the matter thoroughly before you take a step that must be final.

## OVER THE HILLS.

Off, when the great green world was younger,

(Oh, it is old, so old, to-day!)

I longed to go over the great hills yonder,

Into the world, and far away.

When the years came I met them gladly,

(Oh, but they seemed so long to stay!)

I thought each over the hills would lead me,

Into the world, and far away.

Care they brought me, and bitter sorrow;

(Long grew the nights, and dark the day),

But I thought of the path the great hills over,

Into the world and far away.

"Soon thou shalt seek it," my heart said to me,

("Bide thy time till the happy day—")

Thou shalt go wandering the great hills over,

Into the world and far away.

Ah, but still I bide in the valley!

(Darker the nights, and longer the day)

And I never shall pass the great hills over,

Into the world and far away.

**MAG.**—Mix together two cups cold water, one teaspoonful honey, one tablespoonful soft soap, one glass whisky or alcohol; mix all these thoroughly, lay the dress on a table, a breadth at a time, and sponge on both sides, then dip in cold water, and shake out as well as possible, but do not wring it; hang it up to half dry, and then iron with a hot iron on the wrong side; if the dress is only rumpled or creased sponge on the right side with weak gum arabic and water, and iron on the wrong side.

**BETTY.**—Do not allow soap to touch the stain, as that will turn it into a dye, but spread the stained portion over a cup or basin large enough to include the whole of the stain and a margin over, and pour clean, soft, boiling water over it. Of course, it is best to do that at once, and it would then carry the stain off easily. But, in any case, continue pouring for some time, and then if you find you cannot move it, rub in a little powdered borax, and pour on more boiling water; finally put the entire article to soak, and wash in the usual way.

**BOB.**—The North Sea is decidedly more difficult of navigation and dangerous than the Bay of Biscay; a storm in the latter is heavy no doubt, but not particularly fatal to boats that can head out to sea; its destructiveness is owing to boats having to face what is called a "beam sea," that is, to bear the whole strength of the Atlantic surge upon their broadsides, rendering it difficult to keep off the land; in the North Sea there is less show-room, and, in addition to the fierceness of the storms, cross-currents add materially to the navigator's perplexities.

**FRANCE.**—The old-fashioned camphor tied up in pieces of muslin rag is a very good plan; also, alspice berries sprinkled over the furs or other things to be kept; but first of all the articles should be beaten free of dust or any of the eggs of the moth, and then if wrapped up in paper where the parent moths cannot get in they are safe; many in hot countries put them in a barrel and paste brown paper over the top where there is not a hole the size of a pin point; another plan is to put an open bottle containing spirits of turpentine in the wardrobe; closets that are infested with moths may be washed over with a strong infusion of tobacco and sprinkled repeatedly with spirits of camphor; moths in carpets may be got rid of by scrubbing the floor before the carpet is laid with strong hot salt and water, and sprinkling the floor with salt before it is swept once a week; the best cure is plenty of fresh air into every corner and constant sweeping, washing and wiping away of dust; keep the house sweet.

**KIT.**—Apple jelly may be made with dried apples if liked. Take a pound of sliced or cored dried apples and soak them in cold water for twelve hours, then set them on to stew, with sufficient water to cover and half a pound of white sugar. Flavour with grated lemon rind or cinnamon stick. When cooked there should be rather more than a pint of pulp. Add to this half an ounce of gelatine powder, stir until dissolved and pour into a wetted mould to set. When cold turn out and pour mustard round, and stick the shape over with split almonds.

**J. P.**—Go about midnight to the ground with a lighted lamp and pall, and pick off, into the latter, all snails and slugs you find on or about plants; then unstacked or ground lime dusted over the ground before sunrise will kill large numbers; and many will be caught under inverted flower-pots, cabbage, and rhubarb leaves, or any unglazed tiles, crockery or slate laid about to be examined during day; or soap bran in greasy pot liquor, lay it about at night on bits of slate in little heaps, examine in morning to kill off accumulated slugs.

**INEXPERIENCED.**—Whoever waits at table goes to the left hand side of each guest; the vegetables should be handed round if possible, if not set down at the sides; when all the soups and meats are finished, remove the salt, sweet-sauce, bread, water-bottles, cruetiers, and brush the table; then set down the pudding, or whatever sweet is to be used, with cream and sugar; then serve the cheese, and last of all set down a fruit plate and knife and forks to each person; whoever waits at table should do it quietly, making no clattering of plates or noises of any kind.

**TERMINANT.**—You should never wring or crush silk when it is wet, because the creases thus made will remain. The way to wash silk is to spread it smoothly on a clean board, rub white soap upon it, and brush it with a clean soft brush. The silk must be rubbed until all the grease is extracted, then the soap should be brushed off with clean cold water applied to both sides. Most of the colours are liable to be injured when washed in hot water, especially blue and green colours. A little alum dissolved in the last water that is brushed on silk tends to prevent the colours from running.

**ELLA.**—Take two ounces of semolina, one egg, one pint of milk. Rinse out a clean pan with cold water; this helps to keep the milk from catching. Now pour in the milk. When it boils, sprinkle in the semolina. Stir all the time till it becomes thick. Simmer for six minutes. Then let it cool. Grease a pie-dish. Separate the yolk and white of the egg. When the contents of the pan are cool enough, stir in one ounce of sugar and the yolk of the egg. If the mixture is too hot, the egg will curdle. Next beat the white of the egg to a stiff froth. Fold the semolina into the yolk, and then stir the white of egg lightly in. Bake in a moderate oven till a very pale brown on top. Serve immediately.

**MAGGIE.**—To pickle cucumbers, make a brine that will bear an egg, and drop in the cucumbers; cover them with grape leaves; weight them down, and let them stand ten or more days. Then take them out, drain well, and soak a day or two in plenty of clear water, frequently changed. Afterward put them in a kettle with grape and cabbage leaves and a lump of alum. Cover with weak vinegar, and let them stand until they turn green. Then take out, drain and put into stone jars. For each three gallons of pickles use one gallon cider vinegar, and place into it one ounce each of mace and celery seed, two ounces of ginger, three ounces each of cloves and stick cinnamon, four ounces each of mustard seed (black and white mixed), choice black pepper and allspice, two tablespoonfuls of ground mustard, a handful of chopped horseradish, two pods of red pepper, four onions and two pounds of sugar. Boil, and pour it hot over the pickles. More sugar can be added to suit the taste. Cover the jar very closely, and expose to the sun every day during hot weather.

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